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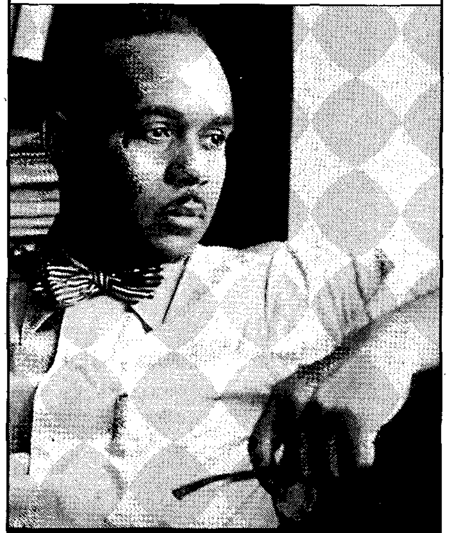

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COMMENT

THE GODS ARE ANXIOUS

The delightful rise of genetic polytheism.

It turns out, according to an article published last month in the journal *Science* and reported on the front page of the *Times*, that there is a gene for anxiety. It seems that people who are fretful, crabby, and neurotic—"kvetches," in the *Times's* translation into regional dialect—tend to have a shorter version of a certain gene (SLC6A4 on chromosome 17q12, if you want to look it up) than do people of sunny disposition. If you're a worrier, in other words, it's not because you have a lot of things in your life to worry about; it's just because you're a worrier. Feel better now? Of course not. You *can't* feel better: that's the whole point.

The discovery of the worry gene follows closely on the discovery, earlier this year, of the "What, me worry?" (or "bungee-jumping") gene, the gene associated with the taste for novelty and excitement. The report announcing the gene for novelty now seems to be the subject of some dispute among scientists, and possibly this new report on the gene for anxiety will run into similar criticism. But one hopes not, for it must be said that these gene-based explanations of personality are immensely clarifying contributions to thought. Readers of the *Times* article on the gene for neuroticism, for example, must have wondered why, if this sort of behavior is genetically determined, New York City has so much of it. The answer must be that New Yorkers are not neurotic because they live in New York; they live in New York because they're neurotic.

Once this principle has been grasped, many prejudices fall away. People are not passionate because they're Italian, as the old and vulgar view of human nature once had it; they're Italian because they're passionate. Cabdrivers are not impatient because they're cabdrivers; they're cabdrivers because they're impatient. Taking care of small children does not make people feel stressed out; feeling stressed out is what makes people take care of small children. And so on. This is determinism, but determinism of a deeply appealing kind, for it reverses the usual relation between accident and necessity in human life. We used to think of our moods and tastes as mere by-products of the social and personal relations we happened to be stuck in. Now we can see that the social and personal relations we happen to be stuck in are only the accidental consequences of our moods and tastes. Many are born impatient; the lucky ones become cabdrivers. The animus seeks its animal. The circularity is breathtaking. It is as

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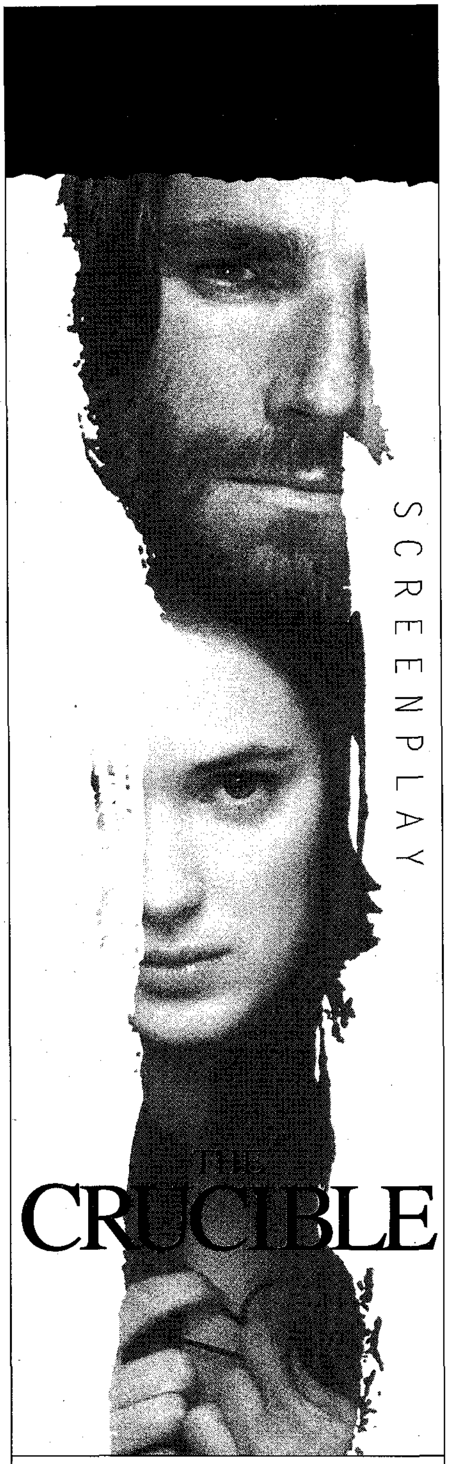

Arthur Miller

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GOD BLESS EVERYONE ON THIS PLANET.

"Another sicko."

though scientists were to explain the behavior of the mosquito by showing it to have a gene for being annoying.

The ascription of personality traits to genetic makeup is one instance of a much larger trend, which is the reëmergence of polytheism. A long time ago, things were explained by reference to the will of unseen deities—to struggles among the gods and goddesses of love, war, wisdom, excess, and so forth. How silly and primitive that all was. Now we explain things by reference to an abbreviated SLC6A4 gene on chromosome 17q12, and feel much superior for it. But there is not, if you think about it, that much difference between saying "The gods are angry" and saying "He has the gene for anger." Both are ways of attributing a matter of personal agency to some fateful and mysterious impersonal power.

In between the old polytheism and the new polytheism there were, of course, a number of fairly successful monotheisms. In between "Circe put a spell on him" and "his dopamine made him do it" (that's the neurotransmitter associated with bungee-jumping) there were, besides the major religious monotheisms, "her subconscious rage against her parents made her do it," "the iron law of the dialectic made her do it," "market forces made her do it," and several other single-term explanations for why people do what they do. Many people today are skeptical of those single-term explanations, and, on the whole, with good reason. Polytheism is a lot more appealing.

For one thing, it is a very indeterminate kind of determinism. If Circe put a spell on you, there was always some other godling around who could take it off. And so it is with genes. Human beings have between fifty and a hundred thousand of them, in billions of combinations, and while one little gene is firing off a signal to bite your fingernails ten other genes may be pumping out the neurochemical equivalent of soothing music. The scientists who found this gene for anxiety, the *Times* says, "suspect that anywhere from nine to fourteen other genes, as well as many environmental factors that have yet to be sorted out, come into play in making one person anxious, another calm." That's covering one's bets pretty thoroughly.

The interesting thing to watch in the rise of gene-based polytheism will be its confrontation with the other big polytheism of the day, which is cultural polytheism—the "his epistemology made him do it" explanation. For what is wired into the personality cannot readily be transformed by cultural input: the software can't reconfigure the hardware. The view that behavior is determined by an inherited genetic package is not easily reconciled with the view that behavior is determined by the kinds of movies a person watches. Most people are likely to want to believe in a little of both—to think that people are pretty much the way they are, and also that reading aloud from "The Book of Virtues" can make them a bit better—but these are very different belief systems. It is like having the Greek gods and the Inca gods occupying the same pantheon. Somebody's got to go.

Maybe they'll all go. Maybe they'll just kill each other off, or cancel each other out. After all, when there are any number of possible deterministic explanations for behavior there might as well be none. The dream of finding an extrapersonal explanation for the course of human life is very old, and it promises relief from the burden of responsibility that each person feels in making a choice and taking the risk that it will be a bad one. Sometimes the dream is sweet—a dream of providential design or evolutionary perfectionism. Sometimes it's a nightmare of atoms colliding blindly with atoms, or of brains suspended in a vat. In the end, though, people have to figure things out for themselves. Go ahead. Ask your genes what to do. You might as well be asking Zeus. Is there a program running our lives? We should be so lucky. —LOUIS MENAND

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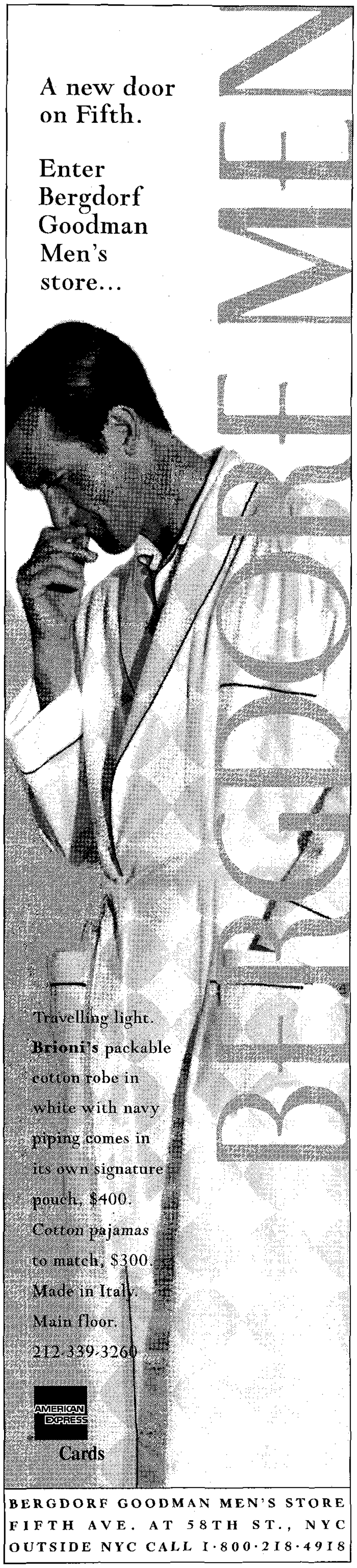
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IN THE MAIL

A FUNDAMENTAL TEXT

Robert S. Boynton's "God and Harvard" (Life and Letters, November 11th), on the Reverend Peter Gomes, provides vital information in this age of rampant hate crime. The Bible is artfully ambiguous about homosexuality and other issues; fundamentalists are intolerant primarily because they lack any appreciation of ambiguity. On the issue of homosexuality, they ignore not only the points raised by Gomes but also a key text in I Samuel, the story of the love between David and Jonathan.

It is love at first sight when Jonathan sees David, a ruddy youth "of a fair countenance"—the only time male beauty is mentioned in a Biblical narrative. Later, David says to Jonathan, "Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes," a phrase that can carry sexual connotations, as it does in Deuteronomy 24:1—and which would explain Saul's shock at his son's love for David. Finally, alone together in a field, David and Jonathan kiss and weep together until David "exceeds." Did they make love? The very possibility—the ambiguity of it all—warrants tolerance.

MARK B. PETERSON
Charlottesville, Va.

THE GOOD OLD DAYS?

Malcolm Gladwell's faithful record of Charles Murray's mendacity over lunch at the American Enterprise Institute (The Talk of the Town, November 18th) made me want to lose mine. Murray's plan for eviscerating government aims to transport us back not to 1960, as he claims, but, rather, to the late eighteen-hundreds, the era of robber barons and laissez-faire. It is certainly interesting, given Murray's evident racism, that 1960 (when Jim Crow was still law) is the date he plucks from the air, because it was precisely then that a large and active government had successfully guaranteed the existence of a thriving middle class—the "vital center," which did not exist before the New Deal and the command economy of the Second World War saved the country from capitalism run amok.

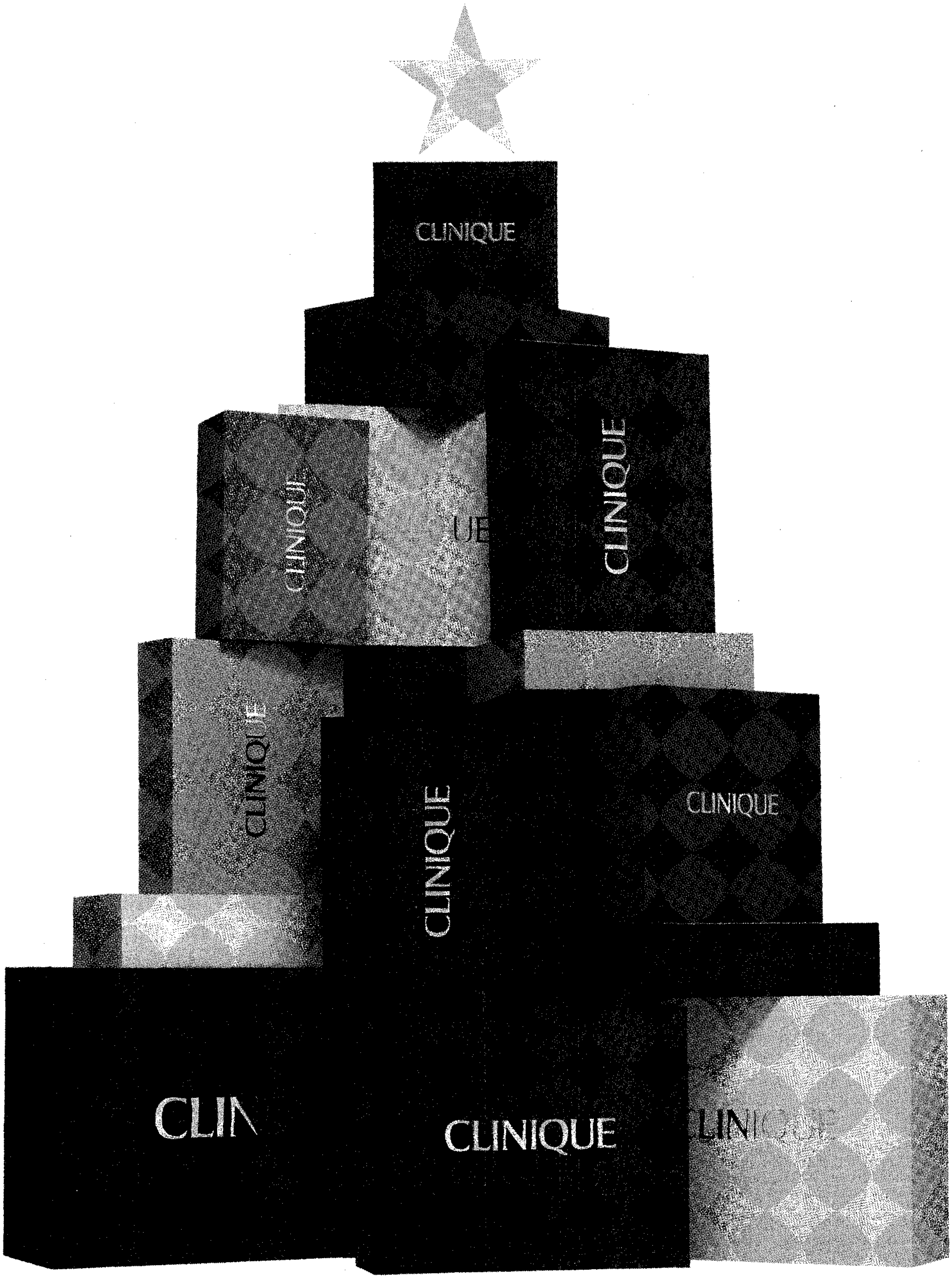
MATTHEW WILLS
Brooklyn, N.Y.

PERSISTENT FAIRY TALES

I was intrigued by Adam Gopnik's account of our collective inclination to tell the truth about American history ("Grim Fairy Tales," November 18th). As a professor of history, I was asked to speak to my son's second-grade class about Christopher Columbus. I'm not sure which is better: to remake the past into a heroic tale when it was not, and leave our children to uncover the lie at some future point, or to tell the sometimes sorry truth and search for a remedy. My own proposal for Columbus Day is to exchange it for "Explorers Day" and celebrate the spirit of adventure. Despite my efforts, my son cheerfully brought home a class project on Columbus's singular bravery; his school principal dressed up as Columbus; and his class colored a picture showing that Columbus discovered that the world was round. It seems our truth-telling sometimes makes only a small noise against larger cultural myths.

MARTHA MAY
Western Connecticut State University
Danbury, Conn.

Letters should be as brief as possible, and sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "In the Mail," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. They may be edited for length and clarity.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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

The Barber of Seville—Michael Feingold's new translation of Beaumarchais's comedy, in a Pearl Theatre Company production. In previews through Dec. 14. Opens Dec. 15 at 2. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

Cloud Tectonics—José Rivera's new play is a fairy-tale romance, set in Los Angeles during a torrential rainstorm, in which a pregnant woman searches for the father of her child. Directed by Tina Landau. Previews begin Dec. 12. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Henry VI, Parts I, II, and III—The New York Shakespeare Festival presents the trilogy, which will run in repertory as "Part 1: The Edged Sword" and "Part 2: Black Storm." In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

Insurrection: Holding History—Robert O'Hara wrote and directed this new time-travel comedy, set in Southampton, Virginia, during the slave uprising led by Nat Turner. Opens Dec. 11 at 8 and continues through Dec. 22. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

Neat—Charlayne Woodard's new one-woman show, about growing up in the sixties, is a companion to her "Pretty Fire," which she performed here in 1993. Directed by Tazewell Thompson. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

No Way to Treat a Lady—The York Theatre Company begins an all-musical season—its first ever—with a comedy-thriller based on the William Goldman novel of the same title, about a detective in pursuit of an actor turned murderer. Book, music, and lyrics by Douglas J. Cohen. In previews. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820.)

Once Upon a Mattress—Gerald Gutierrez directs Sarah Jessica Parker in a revival of the 1959 musical, based on "The Princess and the Pea." In previews. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Scapin—Bill Irwin and Mark O'Donnell's adaptation of Molière's comedy "The Rogueries of Scapin," directed by and starring Mr. Irwin, in a Roundabout Theatre Company production. In previews. (Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Tooth of Crime (Second Dance)—Sam Shepard's new version of his 1972 drama about a rock star past his prime, with a new star, Vincent D'Onofrio, and new music, by T-Bone Burnett. In previews through Dec. 14. Opens Dec. 15 at 7:30. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Andrew Carnegie Presents The Jew of Malta—The Irondale Ensemble Project has blended elements of Christopher Marlowe's tragedy with historical incidents surrounding a steel strike. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 633-1292. Closes Dec. 21.)

Anne Frank and Me—The American Jewish Theatre presents a drama by Cherie Bennett. (307 W. 26th St. 633-9797. Closes Dec. 15.)

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Beat: A Subway Cop's Comedy—John DiResta, New York City transit policeman and stand-up comic, files a report on his subterranean workplace. (Kaufman, 534 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

A Brief History of White Music—A comic revue by Dee Dee Thomas and David Tweedy, in which an all-black cast interprets the music of Sonny and Cher, the Beach Boys, the Beatles, and other honkies. (Village Gate, 240 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

Cakewalk—The subject of Peter Feibleman's play, his twenty-year relationship with Lillian Hellman, is one he's mined before, and his version of the truth is unseemly and self-serving. As Hellman, Linda Lavin gets off some good ones, but she seems almost too healthy, emotionally and physically, to play the poison-filled, self-promoting playwright. Michael Knight, the author's stand-in, is blandly charming and, unlike any writer we know, has the body of a lifeguard. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/18/96.) (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

Chicago—The long-legged Ann Reinking is the ingénue Roxie Hart, a role she played at one point in the original 1975 production; Bebe Neuwirth is streamlined and sardonic as her man-killer sidekick; and the angular chorus line, in skimpy black, is as stunning and hard-edged as Bob Fosse's dances. Walter Bobbie's bookless, setless revival of the Kander-Ebb-Fosse extravaganza of cynicism (choreographed by Reinking this time around) has enough razzle-dazzle and flashes of lucid sarcasm to set the audience cheering almost from the start. The story is about a woman who gets away with murder; this pared-down concert posing as a full-dress musical may do the same. (11/25/96) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

A Christmas Carol—Tony Randall is Scrooge and Ben Vereen is the Ghost of Christmas Present in a musical version of Dickens's holiday tale. Alan Menken wrote the score. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6741. Through Jan. 5.)

The Cocoanuts—The American Jewish Theatre's revival of the Irving Berlin–George S. Kaufman musical that starred the Marx Brothers in 1925. The songs are pleasant enough, but it's the laugh-out-loud comedy that really scores. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

Dreams & Nightmares—The illusionist David Copperfield has come to Broadway, in a show written by David Ives. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Closes Dec. 29.)

Duel Attraction—Two one-acts from the Adobe Theatre Company: "Duet! A Romantic Fable," a multimedia love story by Gregory Jackson and Erin Quinn Purcell, and "Two Men Poised," a love-triangle comedy set in the Wild West, by Jay Reiss. (46 Walker Street Theatre. 560-7387. Closes Dec. 21.)

Family Values—A sex comedy by the Canadian playwright Carl Ritchie. Daniel Ettinger's set, an apartment awash in chintz, is much more tasteful than the sitcomlike proceedings. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 358-5174.)

Forbidden Broadway Strikes Back!—Gerard Alessandrini cuts a satirical swath through the Great White Way in a new edition of his musical parody. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

Full Gallop—The legendary, vividly eccentric fashion editor Diana Vreeland is the subject of Mary Louise Wilson and Mark Hampton's one-woman play, in which Wilson stars. Set in 1971, shortly after Vreeland was fired from *Vogue*, it's very funny and very moving. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

Howard Crabtree's When Pigs Fly—The exuberant designer Howard Crabtree died in June, and this revue of witty, satiric songs (created with and written and directed by Mark Waldrop, and sung by a talented cast dressed in Crabtree's sequinned, feathered, mind-boggling costumes) is a fitting cap to his career. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change—In made-for-musical-theatre voices, the appealing cast of Joe DiPietro and Jimmy Roberts's crowd-pleasing revue about love and marriage sings songs examining made-for-musical-theatre issues. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

The Importance of Being Earnest—This very pleasing and intimate production of Oscar Wilde's nonpareil comedy marks the designer Tony Walton's New York directorial début, and he has assembled an excellent cast for the occasion. An Irish Repertory Theatre production. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes Dec. 22.)

It's a Slippery Slope—With his new monologue, Spalding Gray uses learning to ski as a metaphor for his plummeting-downhill feelings about fatherhood, leaving his wife after fathering a child with another woman, the death of his own father, and other life "passages." He's so smooth and wry that you absolve him for his crappy behavior, thereby absolving yourself—and that, of course, is where his appeal lies. Sundays and Mondays at the Vivian Beaumont. (Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 6.)

Jean Cocteau Repertory—Aphra Behn's Restoration comedy "The Lucky Chance" runs in repertory with Pirandello's "Six Characters in Search of an Author," which closes Dec. 15, and Joe Orton's "What the Butler Saw." (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

Joseph Gabriel: Magic on Broadway—Mr. Gabriel has performed at the Las Vegas Flamingo Hilton for the past ten years, and his feats are certainly impressive, but it's all too clear from the trappings of his act—dancers in polka-dotted boxer shorts, a sequinned Elvis—that he hasn't left Nevada behind. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Juan Darién—A production of astonishing inventiveness from Julie Taymor, whose next task is to stage Disney's "The Lion King." She and her collaborator, the composer Elliot Goldenthal, bill their work as a "carnival mass"; based on a tale by the Uruguayan writer Horacio

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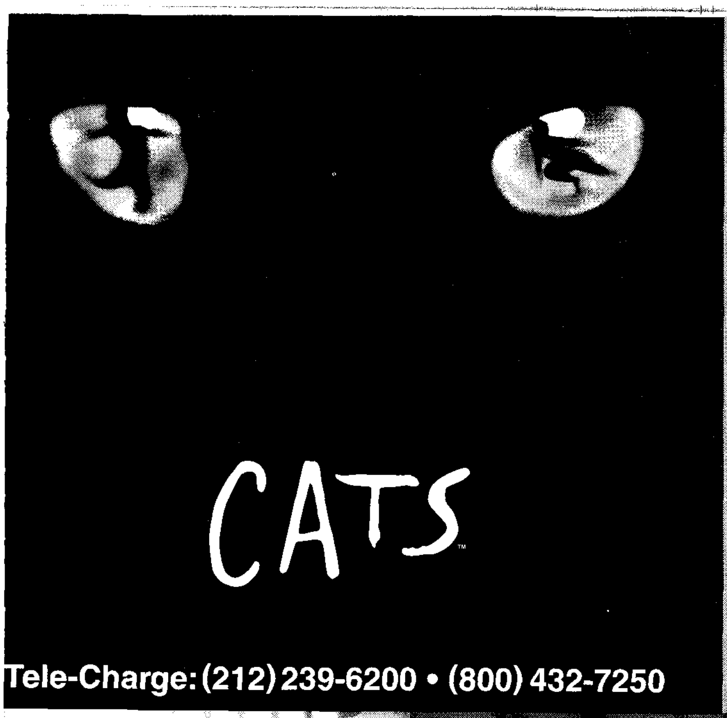

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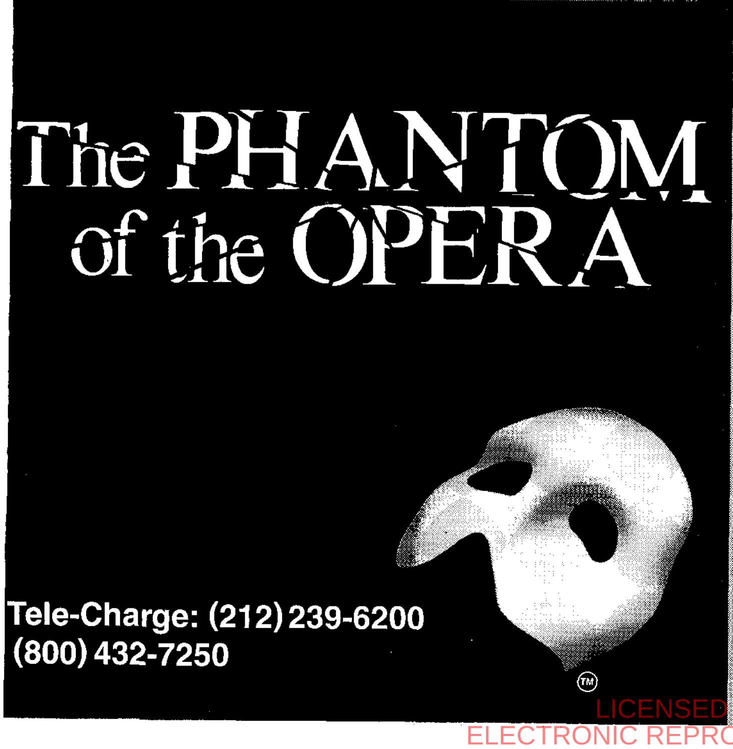
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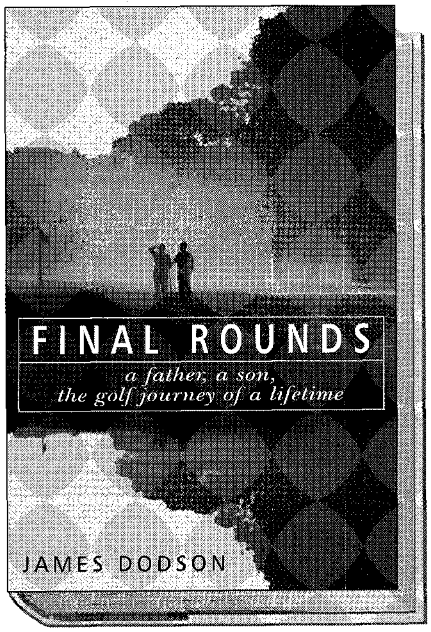

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Quiroga (1878-1937), it tells the story of a baby jaguar who becomes human and is then turned back into an animal. Scene by scene, it's as visually moving as theatre can be—Taymor's puppets and masks are highly expressive, in and of themselves and in the expert way they're manipulated, and the sets, co-created by G. W. Mercier, are teeming with life. Yet overall the piece lacks emotional content; if you were a teacher, you'd give it an A+, but you'd take the student aside and say, "Next time, try to put more *feeling* into it." (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 5.)

LATE NITE CATECHISM—Maripat Donovan offers a commandingly funny performance as the lone nun in charge of an adult catechism class, and the audience brings as much to the performance as the script does. (St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

THE MAIDEN OF LUDMIR—The Folksbiene Playhouse presents a new Yiddish musical by Miriam Hoffman (book and lyrics) and John Clifton (music), based on the life of the nineteenth-century female Torah scholar. (Simultaneous English or Russian translation is available.) (123 E. 55th St. 755-2231.)

NATIVITY—The Vermont-based Bread and Puppet Theatre draws on Bible stories, circus acts, and the Russian folk drama "The Death of King Herod" as it adapts the Christmas story to its tastes. (Los Kabayitos Puppet Theatre, C.S.V. Cultural Center, 107 Suffolk St. 260-4080, ext. 14. Thursdays through Saturdays at 8; Sundays at 3. Through Dec. 22.)

THE NEW BOZENA—Three very funny young clowns who approach life with hilarious innocence and touching wonder. One quivers with fear and timidity, one is gape-mouthed and a little slow, and one has a catlike curiosity—although a cat probably wouldn't try out a staple gun on its tongue. (11/18/96) (Cherry Lane Theatre, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.)

NINE ARMENIANS—Leslie Ayvazian's play is exactly what its title advertises: an extended-family drama in which nine Armenian-Americans cope with assimilation and remember their history. It's a well-worn American-immigrant tale, complete with kids who don't care about the past until a climactic revival of tradition which brings everyone together, but it's humorously told and superbly acted by a cast that includes Michael Countryman, Sophie Hayden, and Kathleen Chalfant. Lynne Meadow directed. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

OLD WICKED SONGS—Jon Marans' well-written piece of sentimental sanctimony asks the question: Can a blocked, arrogant twenty-five-year-old pianist (Justin Kirk) find wisdom under the tutelage of a suicidal singing teacher (Hal Robinson) who survived the Holocaust? (The answer is yes.) (9/16/96) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

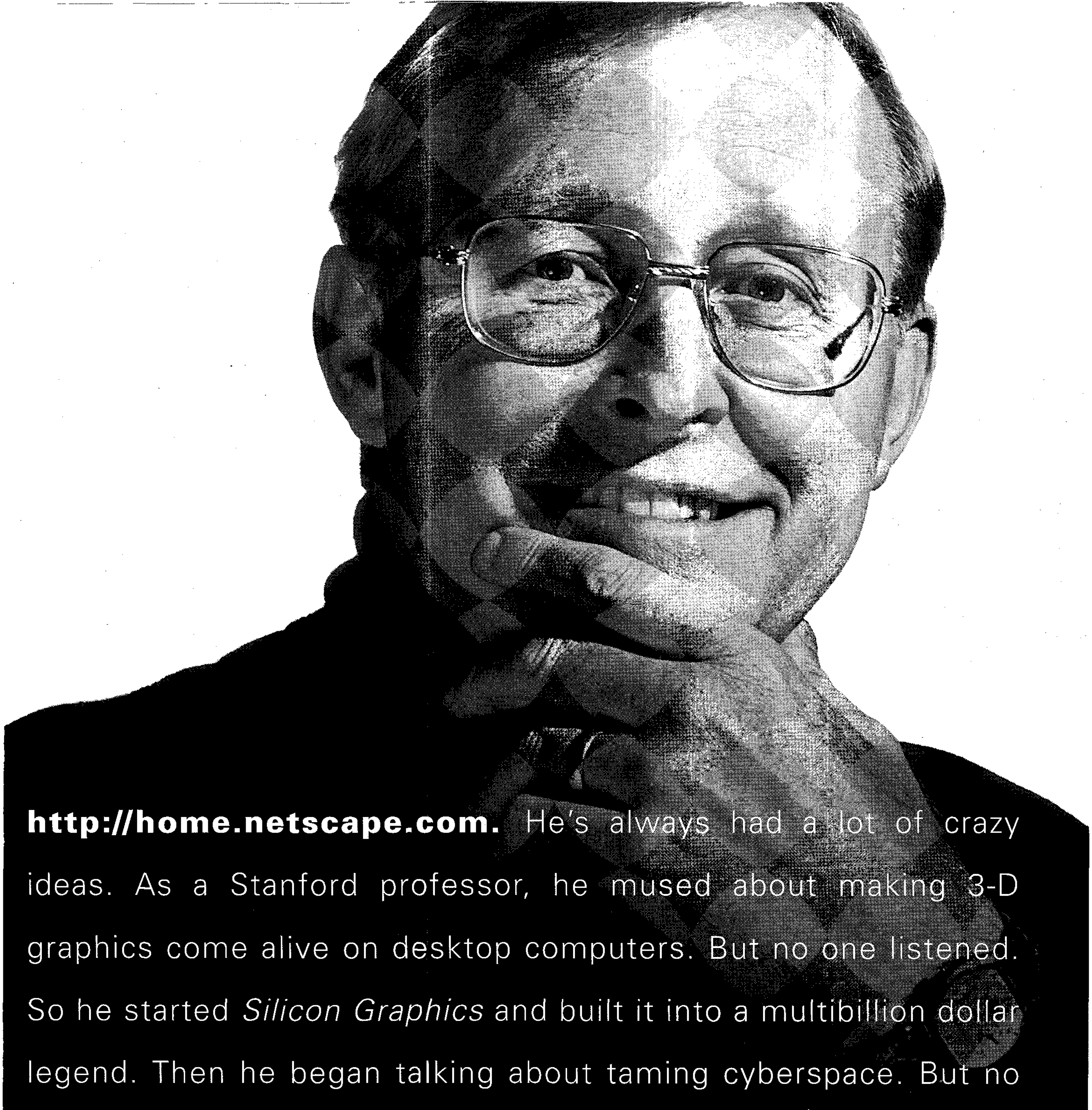
O SOLO MIO FESTIVAL—The New York Theatre Workshop's solo-performance festival this year features works by Emmett Foster and Dael Orlandersmith. (79 E. 4th St. 460-5475. Closes Jan. 5.)

PERMANENT BRAIN DAMAGE (RISK IT! RISK IT!)—The latest musings on human consciousness from Richard Foreman and his Ontological-Hysteric Theatre. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

PRESENT LAUGHTER—As the monumentally egotistical West End star Garry Essendine, Frank Langella keeps the core of Noël Coward's 1939 comedy of bad manners alive with a full-tilt assault on the character's outrageousness. Unfortunately, the director, Scott Elliott, seems to think that he's liberating Coward by turning the play into a bisexual romp. But he orchestrates some delicious farce moments, and the supporting players are funny even when Elliott is leading them down blind alleys. (11/25/96) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

THE RADIO CITY CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR—Santa dances, sings, and—for the first time—conducts the orchestra, in the annual extravaganza, which also includes live animals and (of course) the Rockettes. (Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. Through Jan. 5.)

THE REHEARSAL—If you have a yen to see a bunch of disparate acting styles on stage at the same time, this production of Jean Anouilh's 1963 farce is for you. Nicholas Martin's rather



http://home.netscape.com. He's always had a lot of crazy ideas. As a Stanford professor, he mused about making 3-D graphics come alive on desktop computers. But no one listened. So he started *Silicon Graphics* and built it into a multibillion dollar legend. Then he began talking about taming cyberspace. But no one listened. So he handpicked a team of the best hacker talent in the telecosm. And soon after, *Netscape* soared to the highest IPO in market history. Now they listen. **Jim Clark bought his first copy of Forbes as a computer consultant in 1970.**

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loosey-goosey direction ends up making a porridge of the play, when a glittering crystal is what's wanted. Though nothing can destroy Anouilh's cleverness, it's frustrating to watch such good actors as Frances Conroy and Roger Rees at anything less than their best. The cast includes David Threlfall and Kathryn Meisle; Jeremy Sams did the translation. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

The Santaland Diaries—The writer David Sedaris has turned his piece about working as an elf at Macy's one Christmas into a monologue, but the material works much better on the page than it does on the stage. Timothy Olyphant is the sardonic elf; Joe Mantello directed this little slip of a show. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

The Seven Streams of the River Ota—Robert Lepage's eight-hour consideration of Hiroshima, the Holocaust, and the AIDS epidemic. Presented by the Brooklyn Academy of Music. The play is performed in two parts and continues through Dec. 14. (Majestic, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. For more information, call 718-636-4100.)

Sharps, Flats & Accidentals—The Flying Karamazov Brothers have blown into town with a new show of music-related jugglery. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 1.)

Kirk Acevedo and Vincent D'Onofrio, in "Tooth of Crime (Second Dance)."

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

Skylight—The playwright David Hare's success and his social conscience are still at odds. This time, the inimitable Michael Gambon plays a successful entrepreneur, and the powerful, appealing Lia Williams is his beloved former mistress, who has given up the lush life to teach the underprivileged. Their differences are factored out as systematically as an algebraic equation. (9/30/96) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Closes Dec. 29.)

The Springhill Singing Disaster—Karen Trott's one-woman show, which was seen last season at Playwrights Horizons, is an affectionate (but never sappy) coming-of-age story about a girl and her guitar, who are constant companions from the fourth grade on, and it's refreshingly unhip. Trott has a good, folkie voice, but she isn't above sending up her younger off-key self. Directed by Lonny Price. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

Taking Sides—Ronald Harwood's play is part fact and part fiction. It stars Daniel Massey as the conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler and Ed Harris as an American Army officer who interrogates him about his alleged ties to the Nazis, and its approach to moral complexity is deeply shallow. (11/4/96) (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

Three by Beckett—The Other Theatre presents "Nacht und Träume," directed by Joseph Chaikin, "Quad I and II," and "Not I." (Judith Anderson, 422 W. 42nd St. 332-0967. Closes Dec. 22.)

The Vagina Monologues—Eve Ensler performs her one-woman show about, well . . . (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. Closes Dec. 31.)

The Waste Land—With the assistance of Deborah Warner's direction and Jean Kalman's minimal, evocative lighting, Fiona Shaw makes a rich tapestry of T. S. Eliot's monumental poem, smoothly and believably animating the inhabitants of its "Unreal City" and giving us a glimpse of the whole from which these fragments have fallen. (Liberty, 234 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes Dec. 15.)

When the World Was Green (A Chef's Fable) and **Chicago**—The Signature Theatre Company presents a pair of terrific one-acts by Sam Shepard (the first co-written in 1996 with the director Joseph Chaikin, the second from 1965) which are highlighted by two superb performances—by Alvin Epstein, as a prisoner who has killed the wrong man, and by Wayne Maugans, who delivers a monologue from the bathtub that is part childish denial, part buffoonery, and part raw sex. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Closes Dec. 15.)

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **COWGIRLS:** Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GREASE!:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **AN IDEAL HUSBAND:** Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE KING AND I:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LOVE THY NEIGHBOR:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MASTER CLASS:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **ROB BECKER'S DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100. (Closes Jan. 4.) . . . **SHOW BOAT:** Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. (Closes Jan. 5.) . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **SUNSET BOULEVARD:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4007. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200. . . . **VICTOR/VICTORIA:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.

DANCE

"The Harlem Nutcracker"—The choreographer Donald Byrd uses "black vernacular dance, social dancing, and musical theatre" in his uptown epic set primarily to Duke Ellington's arrangement of Tchaikovsky's ballet. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Dec. 11 at 7, Dec. 12-14 at 8, and Dec. 15 at 3.)

New York City Ballet—With its annual "Nutcracker" enchantment (through Jan. 5), the company returns to the business of inspiring little girls in pigtails to dream of a life *en pointe*. (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Dec. 11-12 and Dec. 17 at 6, Dec. 13 at 8, Dec. 14 at 2 and 8, and Dec. 15 at 1 and 5.)

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre—Dec. 11 at 8: "Night Creature," "Urban Folk Dance," "Vespers," and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 12 at 8: "Shelter," "Cavalcade," and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 13 at 8: A program devoted to the works of Judith Jamison—"Riverside," "Sweet Release," and "Hymn." . . . ¶ Dec. 14 at 2: "The Winter in Lisbon," "Cavalcade," and "Suite Otis." . . . ¶ Dec. 14 at 8: "Polish Pieces," "Treading," "Vespers," and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 15 at 3: "Fathers and Sons," "Cavalcade," and "Suite Otis." . . . ¶ Dec. 15 at 7:30: "Hymn," "Shelter," and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 8: "Night Creature," "Urban Folk Dance," "Shelter," and "Memoria." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Through Dec. 31.)

Ballet Hispanico—The Upper West Side company premières works on Latin themes from David Roussève, George Faison, and María Rovira. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Dec. 11-13 at 8, Dec. 14 at 2 and 8, and Dec. 15 at 2 and 7:30.)

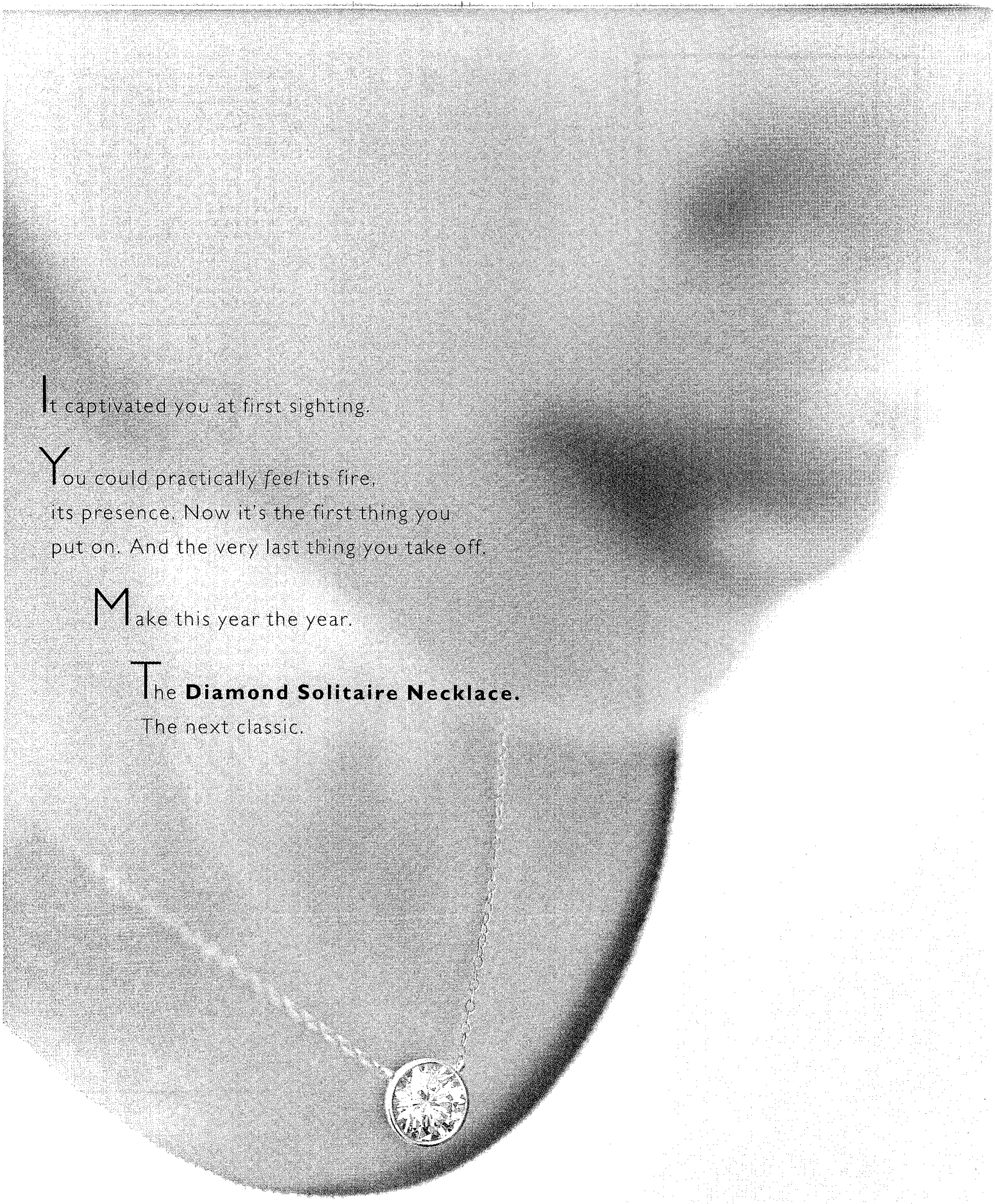
92nd Street Y Harkness Dance Project—Dec. 10-12 at 8: The choreographer Merián Soto and the installation artist Pepón Osorio collaborate on several works in a sensual palette, including "Como Desnudarse (How to Undress)." . . . ¶ Dec. 14 at 8 and Dec. 15 at 3 and 8: The choreographer Amy Sue Rosen and the set designer Derek Bernstein stage a dance for ten rabbis on ladders. . . . ¶ Dec. 17-19 at 8: Jane Comfort and Company. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 996-1100.)

"Half-Life"—The former Trisha Brown dancer Lance Gries opens the doors of the Randy Warshaw Dance Studio for an evening-length collage of drama-infused movement. (115 Wooster St. For reservations, call Danspace Project at 674-8194. Dec. 12-14 at 8 and Dec. 15 at 6. Through Dec. 21.)

"Ballroom"—The Venezuelan choreographer David Zambrano has assembled an international cast for his program of revisionist couple dancing. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Dec. 12-15 at 8:30.)

"Fruitcake Follies"—Doug Elkins Dance Company performs a holiday medley of capoeira and disciplined club dance, to the music of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Barry White, and David Byrne, among others. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Dec. 11-15 at 8. Through Dec. 29.)

Dancenoise—Lucy Sexton and Annie Iobst, the actress-dancer-kooks who make up Dancenoise, bring their choreographed anarchy back to New York for their first full-length revue here in three years. "We haven't been doing full-length shows because there's no money," Sexton explains. "But *not* doing shows is no fun. We figured, So what if there's no money? Just because it's the holidays, that's no excuse for not having fun." (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Dec. 12-15 at 8:30.)



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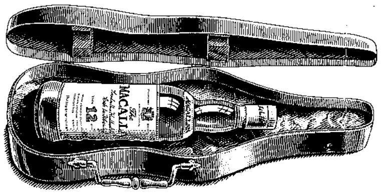

THE MACALLAN'S PLACE AS LEADER OF THE GREAT BAND of whiskies was roundly spelt out the other day in a learned magazine.

The writer mused on the meaning of the term 'Grande Marque', which he concluded, means simply 'Big Name' — and, he went on, 'Rolls Royce, Harrods, The Macallan and STRADIVARIUS are all Grande Marques in their spheres.'

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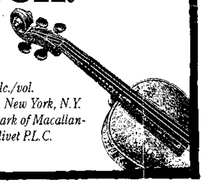

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NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Howard Alden, Michael Moore, and Warren Vache—A chamber-jazz supergroup—guitarist, bassist, and trumpeter, respectively—that makes beautiful music and beautiful music only. Its members immerse themselves in melody and the pleasures of tone; they're gently subversive generals leading an army of players which is fortifying the city with lyricism and grace. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. 229-5689. Dec. 13 at 6.)

Jon Spencer Blues Explosion—It's hard not to love a record that begins with someone shrieking "Bell-bottoms!," and that's what happened on "Orange," the last CD by this savage New York trio. The Explosion devotes a great deal of time and energy to the enduring mysteries of the blues, injecting the idiom with ragged nineties-style references: tin-can drums, a string section, and, here and there, a blast of head-butting distortion. The band (whose latest record is called "Now I Got Worry") spends more than three hundred days a year on the road, and Spencer knows enough swampy, greasy-spoon guitar to conjure up an original blend of Isaac Hayes, Howlin' Wolf, and the psychobilly hero Hasil Adkins. (Roxy, 515 W. 18th St. 307-7171. Dec. 14 at 8.)

Rush—A few years ago, *Spin* published a piece called "Confessions of a Rush Fan," which set in motion a revisionist look at the much maligned Canadian trio. Any band that has made more than twenty records over more than twenty years with the same lineup deserves a fair amount of praise. That impressive body of work notwithstanding, Geddy Lee's insectile screech is still one of the most abrasive instruments in rock. (Nassau Coliseum. 516-794-9300. Dec. 14 at 8. . . .¶ Continental Airlines Arena, the Meadowlands. 201-935-3900. Dec. 15 at 8.)

Kenny Rogers—The bearded one brings his country love to Long Island. (Westbury Music Fair. 516-334-0800. Dec. 14 at 8 and Dec. 15 at 3 and 7.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Vocalist **ANDREA MARCOVICCI** is currently in the midst of an extended run. Dining.

Arthur's Tavern, 57 Grove St. (675-6879)—Mondays belong to the Grove Street Stompers, Tuesdays through Thursdays to Al Bundy and Johnny Parker, Fridays and Saturdays to the Freddy Francis trio, and Sundays to Lee Lorenz and the Creole Cookin' Jazz Band.

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—The legendary club has a new address and bigger digs, and Charlie Parker's name still shines proudly on the awning. And on the banner behind the stage. And on the T-shirts and sweatshirts in the gift shop. The black-and-white photographs of jazz greats are for sale, so you can really savor the memories. Dec. 15-16: The **JIMMY BRUNO** trio. California's Concord Records nurtures a crop of swinging, no-frills guitarists, all of whom could stand greater recognition; Bruno is a prime example. A live recording is planned for this engagement. Starting Dec. 17: The **TONY WILLIAMS** trio. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Dec. 15: **DIANNE REEVES.** Starting Dec. 17: Guitarist-vocalist **JOHN PIZZARELLI** hosts a Christmas-flavored show with the Don Sebesky orchestra. Dining.

Cajun, 129 Eighth Ave., at 16th St. (691-6174)—A New Orleans-style restaurant specializing in Dixieland and swing. On Fridays, catch the Canal Street Dixieland Jazz and Blues Band. Saturdays belong to the New Atlantic Jazz Band.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through New Year's Eve, the great **BOBBY SHORT.** Time has not diminished the tasteful virtuosity of Short's ivory-tinkling, nor has it taken the edge off his gregarious wit as a singer and showman. A fixture at the Carlyle, he can still spin an Ira Gershwin lyric with all the sophistication, humor, and pathos it deserves. Also well served are gems by Duke Ellington, Dorothy Fields, Irving Berlin, and, of course, Cole Porter. A de-lightful, de-lovely evening. . . .¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **BARBARA CARROLL** is in attendance.

Fifty Seven Fifty Seven, 57 E. 57th St. (758-5757)—A sleek piano-and-bass room in the Four Seasons Hotel. Dining.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Dec. 15: The **BILLY STRITCH** trio. This tuneful Texan captured attention in the early eighties as the bottom third of the vocal trio Montgomery, Plant, and Stritch. The group broke up in 1990, but Stritch persevered as a singing pianist and an arranger (most spectacularly for Liza Minnelli). In this show, he'll range through jazz, cabaret, country, and comic numbers, backed up by a trio. Dining.

ONLY CONNECT

Word by Word (http://www.salon1999.com/weekly/lamott.html)—With all the talk of "personalization" on the Web, no one has yet solved the question of personality: What online columnist or chat host would you really want to spend time with? (So many seem phony, or scary, or both.) *Salon,* the cultural Webzine, has given us an answer in Anne Lamott. Since her biweekly "online diary" began in February, the noted author ("Bird by Bird," "All New People," "Operating Instructions"), single mom, and cranky Christian has grown into her role as virtual diarist and reality checker. Lamott is refreshingly noncyber (in an A.O.L.-bashing entry she confessed to never having seen *Salon*), and she can make you laugh and cry in the space of a few paragraphs. This accomplishment would be cause for celebration in a conventional medium; on the Web, it's nothing short of miraculous.

Word by Word keeps its eye on the ordinary—children's birthdays, feelings of utter worthlessness—while parading the writer's anxieties by like Macy's balloons. In a parody of "The Rules," the best-selling man-snagging primer, she writes: "Let him understand from day one that if he ever leaves you, you are going to hang yourself in front of his house." Of her uncharitable feelings for one Republican supermom she says, "I thought such awful thoughts that I cannot even say them out loud because they make Jesus want to drink gin straight out of the cat dish."

Funny as she is, Lamott's real genius lies in capturing the ineffable, describing not perfect moments but imperfect ones (like the instant in which you realize you're forgiving someone you hate) perfectly. While brooding about a friend's seriously ill child, she witnesses a lunar eclipse: ". . . you got to see the moon's whole life pass before your very eyes." *Salon's* Table Talk provides an ongoing forum for those who want to express their feelings about Lamott's writing, though it's sometimes better just to sit, and read.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—An Old New York kind of place, with dark wood panelling, white tablecloths, and brass figurine lamps. Dec. 11-14: Piano and bass with **JOANNE BRACKEN** and **CECIL MC BEE.**

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Dec. 13: **DEREK BAILEY,** the poet of guitar noise, whose intense, probing style has made him the international spokesman for spontaneous, nonlinear improvisation. Dec. 14: **TIM BERNE'S BLOODCOUNT.** A mainstay of the city's new-jazz scene, the saxophonist makes music in a skewed language all his own—lyrical yet fractured, rigorous yet edgy and alive.

MAXIM'S, 680 Madison Ave., at 61st St. (751-5111)—In 1985, Pierre Cardin spent millions to open this mock-nineteenth-century bistro, which features stained glass, bevelled mirrors, and inlaid ceilings. But the eighties ended, and the club went dark for five years. A new management has revamped the menu, lowered the prices, and "done away with the dress code." Dec. 14: **ANN HAMPTON CALLAWAY.** Dining.

RAINBOW & STARS, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—The great cabaret in the sky. Hear her roar: **HELEN REDDY** is in the house through early January. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Sean Mahony and Claudette Sierra. Closed Mondays.

RED BLAZER TOO, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—Thursdays belong to Stan Rubin's big band, Fridays to Lew Anderson's big band, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and his Stompers.

SMALLS, 183 W. 10th St. (929-7565)—This aptly named club features up-and-coming players jamming late into the night. Dec. 13-14: The **RICHIE VITALE** quartet, featuring **RALPH LA LAMA.** Tenor saxophonist LaLama is everywhere these days—and he deserves to be: he's a no-nonsense post-bop improviser who has yet to play an unswinging note. He'll be hard to miss in trumpeter Vitale's fine band.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—A convivial and crowded jazz club where the musicians are always top-shelf. **VINCENT HERRING** (in through Dec. 15) may have a Cannonball Adderley obsession, but lately he's been asserting his own highly charged personality. Starting Dec. 17: The **RAY BRYANT** trio. Dining.

TAVERN ON THE GREEN, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—The Chestnut Room may resemble a hunting lodge decorated by Liberace, but the performances here are no joke. Dining.

VILLAGE GATE, 240 W. 52nd St. (307-5252)—The **ROY GERSON** quartet is in the midst of a two-week run. Dining.

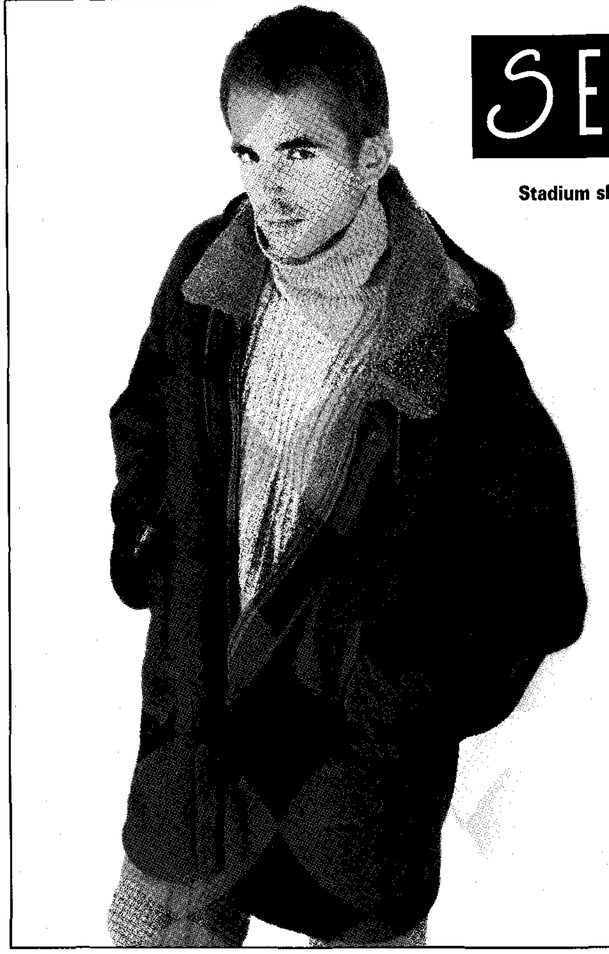
VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Dec. 15: The **JACKIE MC LEAN** quartet. In the fifties, alto saxophonist McLean was a sideman for Miles Davis; by the sixties, iconoclastic players like Ornette Coleman were working with him. Having kept himself in the fray for decades, McLean is now a compendium of modern jazz: he makes the distinctions between bop, hard-bop, and modal playing disappear. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

ROCK, ETC.

BLARNEY STAR, 43 Murray St. (732-2873)—Home to fine Irish music every Friday night.

BOTTOM LINE, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Dec. 14: **MARSHALL CRENSHAW.** This pop polymath has had a roller-coaster career since he released his first album in 1982. In 1994, he published a marvellous anthology of reviews and critical essays, "Hollywood Rock: A Guide to Rock 'n' Roll in the Movies," and released an independent-label album, "Live . . . My Truck Is My Home," which surveyed his entire career. He's sometimes too brainy for his own good, but when he hits his stride, he rocks with the best of them. On "Miracle of Science," his first new studio album in five years, the onetime great pretender of power pop finally manages to balance his songwriter and cover-artist hats and demonstrates a heretofore under-represented (on record, anyway) informality and friskiness. To wit: an original instrumental, "Theme from 'Faregun,'" that's worthy of the Shadows, and a great version of "Twenty-five Forty-one," the old Hüsker Dü song. **JANE SIBERRY** begins a two-night stand on Dec. 17.

BROWNIES, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—Dec. 11: **KEVIN SALEM** has played guitar for Freedy Johnston and Yo La Tengo; his own record, "Soma City," was a collection of for-



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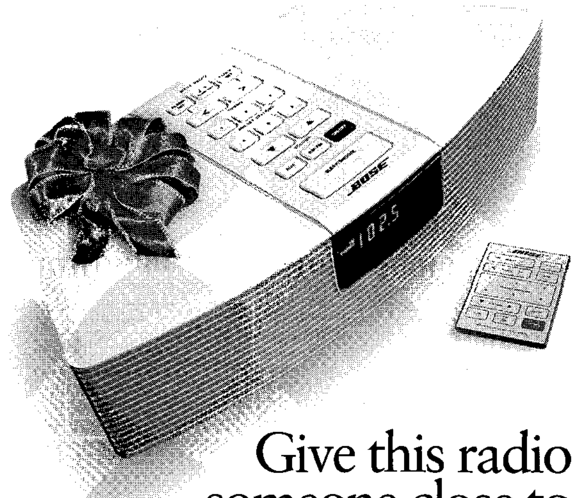

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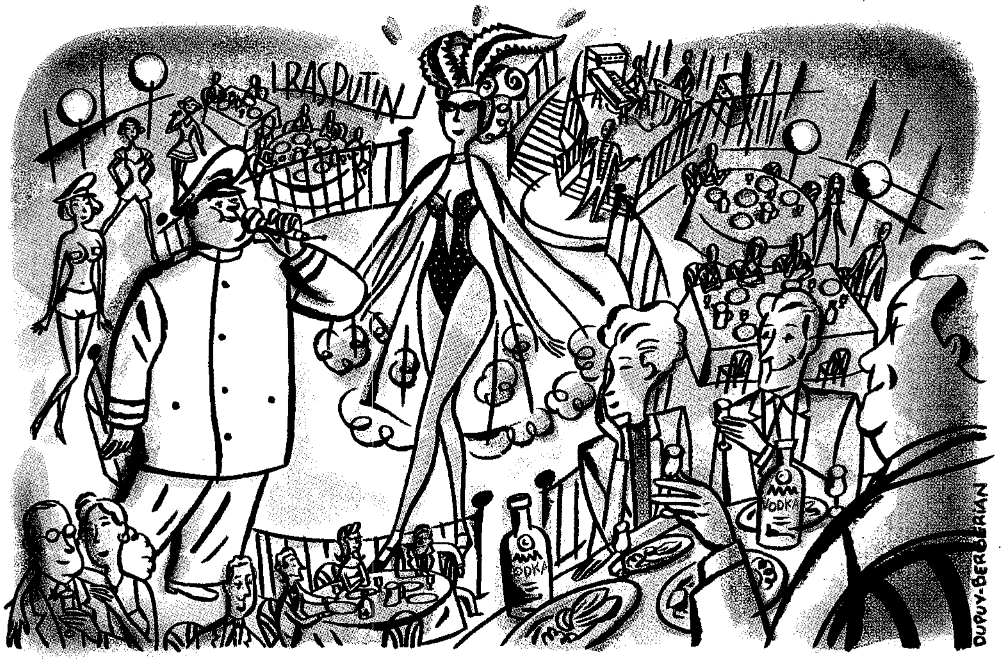
lorn folk-rock gems. Dec. 17: Local punk-folkie DANIEL CARTIER.

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Dec. 13-14: Blues belter BIG TIME SARAH.

Continental Divide, 25 Third Ave., at St. Marks Pl. (529-6924)—Hipsters, punks, poseurs, N.Y.U. students, the occasional skinhead—a typical East Village bar. Live music nightly.

The Cooler, 416 W. 14th St. (229-0785)—A lavender and stainless-steel vault deep in the heart of the meat district. Dec. 14: HASSAN HAKMOUN and friends.

Don Hill's, 511 Greenwich St. (219-2850)—A tidy little SoHo bar with an above-average P.A. system and topnotch local bands on the docket. Friday night is SqueezeBox, a vinyl-and-velvet gay glamfest, hosted by Misstress Formika.



Vodka and blini at Rasputin, in Sheepshead Bay.

Duplex, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. S. (255-5438)—Everyone is a star here—the pianist, the bartender, the waiters, and the audience. The fabulous DRESSING ROOM DIVAS entertain every Saturday night.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—A comfortable neo-Moroccan bar hidden inside the Time Café. The downstairs room, where bands perform, is a fine spot to take in a show. Dec. 11: MADELEINE PEYROUX. The MINGUS BIG BAND still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

The Greatest Bar on Earth, 1 World Trade Center (524-7000)—Hyperbole, perhaps, but it's certainly the highest. And Thursdays through Saturdays you'll find live music, dancing, and dining, a hundred and seven stories above the city. Dec. 12: The FLYING NEUTRINOS. This itinerant New Orleans jazz band—its members grew up in the Big Easy, took a brief detour through Europe, and wound up adrift in the East River on a homemade paddleboat—is a family affair. Cousins Ingrid Lucia and Todd Lundagin, who are both in their twenties, lead the group: Lucia's sassy patter and mischievous grin are a lot like Billie Holiday's, and wonder boy Todd plays trombone, tap-dances, and has a disarming Chet Baker-like voice.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—This sprawling two-floor establishment has been all things to all people: meeting hall, rock club, jazz club, Off Broadway theatre. Dec. 13: CORROSION OF CONFORMITY. . . . ¶The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday. The dancers share a passion for the Lindy Hop, a dance that involves a lot of whirling and the occasional display of underwear. Sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Dec. 11: WILLIE NILE and FRANCIS DUNNERY. At the dawn of the eighties, Nile, a wee dynamo of a singer-songwriter in the Dylansteen mold, was opening stadium shows for The Who at Pete Townshend's request. Legal tangles drove his career off track, but not—as his periodic resurfacings keep demonstrating—his talent. Transplanted British guitarist Dunnery has employed a novel setup during his recent "residencies" at small clubs: acoustic guitar and laptop—the better to remember freshly written lyrics with. After having plunked his anchor down here for a month of Mondays, he's likely to be working through a new batch of songs in progress. Let's hope they're as quirky and absorbing as the ones on his recent album, "Tall Blonde Helicopter." Dec. 12-13: BUFFALO TOM. Dec. 14-15: The OCEAN BLUE.

Les Poulets, 16 W. 22nd St. (229-2000)—The name may be French, but the music here is Latin: expect salsa, merengue, and the occasional cha-cha. Dining.

Rasputin, 2670 Coney Island Ave., at Ave. X (718-332-8111)—With a bottle of vodka on your table and a bellyful of blini, you can't help but be affected by this Sheepshead Bay supper club's powerful moods, which alternate between Old World nostalgia (blindsidingly sad Russian ballads) and New World celebration (Vegas-style burlesque). The floor show is equal parts Ziegfeld, Fellini, and Michael Jackson; when it's over, you're likely to find yourself on the dance floor with the rest of the done-up clientele, dancing like a fool to the wedding-band rock.

Rodeo Bar, 375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—The walls simulate a log cabin, smoke blows through the nostrils of a buffalo head, a horse trailer has been converted into a bar, and you get peanuts for eating and, sometimes, throwing.

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut with a fruit-and-bamboo motif, dedicated to calypso, reggae, and the bossa nova. Dec. 16: EDDIE PALMIERI. Dining.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Dec. 13-14: JERRY JEFF WALKER. He may still be best known for his early-seventies ode to a fellow named Bojangles, but his recently released new album is fashioned as a tribute to the Lone Star State, which has been the singer's adopted home since 1971. It's called "Viva Luckenbach!" and it features gentle country-folk textures and titles like "Keep Texas Beautiful."

Webster Hall, 125 E. 11th St. (353-1600)—A byzantine disco wonderland with four floors, a coffee shop, and a wig boutique. Wednesday is drag night. Psychedelic Thursdays feature grunge acts and cheap beer.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Masterpieces in Little: Portrait Miniatures from the Collection of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II." Through Jan. 5. . . . ¶ The largest exhibition of the master landscape painter Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot mounted in more than a hundred years. Through Jan. 19. . . . ¶"Eugène Cuvelier, Photographer in the Circle of Corot," an exhibit of salted-paper prints from the eighteen-fifties and -sixties. Through Jan. 12. . . . ¶ The cynosure of a large exhibition surveying the career of the Scottish architect and designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868-1928) must certainly be the restored Ladies' Luncheon Room from Miss Cranston's Ingram Street Tea Rooms, in Glasgow. Through Feb. 16. . . . ¶ "Queen Nefertiti and the Royal Women" presents narrative reliefs and sculptures from Egypt's Amarna period (1353-1336 B.C.). Through Feb. 2. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—The Jasper Johns retrospective features two hundred and twenty-five works—paintings, drawings, prints, and sculptures—and naturally includes a few flags, targets, numerals, and cross-hatch patterns. Through Jan. 21. . . . ¶ Two installations by the Toronto art collective General Idea: "One Day of AZT" (1991), a set of five human-size fibreglass-and-vinyl pills, on the floor; and "One Year of AZT" (1991), three hundred and sixty-five sets of pills, arranged in months, on the walls. Through Jan. 7. . . . ¶ "New Photography 12" features work by Richard Billingham, Thomas Demand, Osamu Kanemura, Sophie Ristelhueber, Georgina Starr, and Wolfgang Tillmans. Through Feb. 4. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

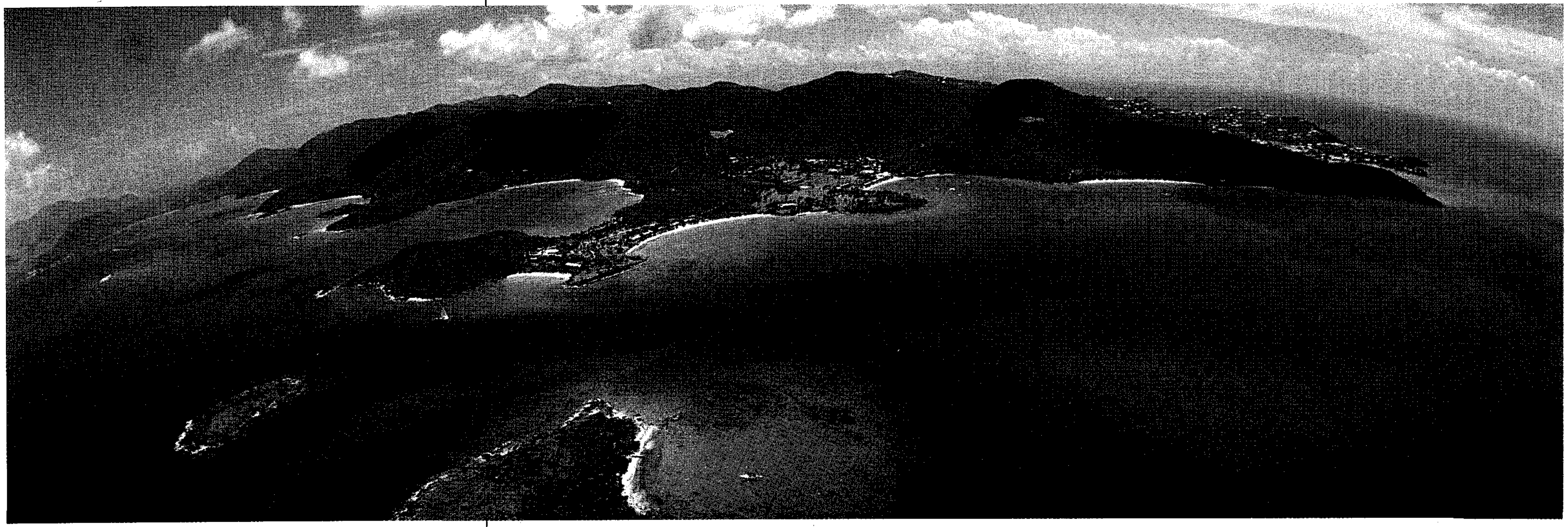
Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"Ellsworth Kelly," a large survey of the artist's paintings, sculptures, works on paper, and photographs. Through Jan. 19. (For more Kelly, see Galleries—Chelsea.) (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway, at Prince St.—"The Hugo Boss Prize: 1996." The Guggenheim clearly had Britain's prestigious Turner Prize in mind when it established this award, named for a German menswear designer—a source of funding which some have suggested is, well, a bit tacky. But there can be no denying the merit of the inaugural-year short list: Laurie Anderson, Janine Antoni, Matthew Barney, Stan Douglas, Cai Guo Qiang, and Yasumasa Morimura. The winner will be announced on December 10—after this issue goes to press—and the artists will be judged on the basis of their work as a whole, rather than on the strength of their installations here. That's a good thing for Barney, who bothered to submit only a few stills and props from his splendid video "Cremaster 1." Antoni comes off best, with "Slumber," a complex piece including a bed in which the artist sleeps each night, an electroencephalograph that records her brain-wave activity, and a loom on which she weaves her EEG patterns into a blanket: a recasting of the myth of Penelope. The effect is riveting. Through Jan. 19. . . . ¶ "Max Beckmann in Exile." Through Jan. 5. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"Making Mischief," an excellent exhibition chronicling the Dada invasion of New York, from the Great War through the

DUPUY-BERBERIAN

While Christopher Columbus
was sailing around discovering places,



he found the U.S. Virgin Islands.
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restaurants, championship golf courses
and the bikini. Of course, if he
had seen it like that, he might never
have made it to where you live.

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early twenties. Chief among its attractions is a significant selection of pieces by Marcel Duchamp, including a painstaking reconstruction (recently made by Swedish scholars) of his masterpiece "The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even," also known as the "Large Glass." Through Feb. 23. . . . ¶ "I'll Be Your Mirror," a retrospective of Nan Goldin's disturbing photographs of the gritty, glamorous downtown life. Through Jan. 5. (A concurrent show of Goldin's pictures of children is at Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St., through Dec. 21.). (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—An exhibit of the Codex Leicester, Leonardo's manuscript on such scientific subjects as hydrodynamics and astronomy. Through Jan. 1. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—The museum's extensive Chinese collection has handsome new quarters in which a careful, lucid presentation offers a broad look at the art of the Middle Kingdom, from Neolithic stone carvings to blue-and-white ceramics of the late Ch'ing dynasty. . . . ¶ "In the Light of Italy: Corot and Early Open-Air Painting," an exquisite exhibition of oil sketches which makes a marvellous pendant to the big Corot show at the Met. Through Jan. 12. . . . ¶ A small show of black-and-white photographs by Bruce Cratsley. Through Jan. 5. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St.—A mid-career survey of glazed ceramic, bronze, and mixed-medium works by Michael Lucero. Through Feb. 16. (See also Galleries—Downtown.) (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

China Institute, 125 E. 65th St.—"The Life of a Patron" imaginatively re-creates the world of Zhou Lianggong (1612-72), an important art collector, biographer, and scholar, who collected the works of highly individualistic artists such as Gong Xian, represented here by a 1671 album of stark, expressionistic landscapes. Through Dec. 21. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

The Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.—"The Illegal Camera." The Nazi occupation of the Netherlands is best known to most of us through Anne Frank's diary, but another secret record of the era was made by Dutch photographers, both professional and amateur; a selection of their work has been gathered in this stunning exhibition. Through Dec. 15. . . . ¶ "From Court Jews to the Rothschilds: Art, Patronage, and Power, 1600-1800." Through Jan. 19. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Museum of American Folk Art, Columbus Ave. at 65th St.—"Pride of Place: Vernacular Architecture in American Folk Art" features paintings, sculptures, furniture, needlework, and decorative arts from the past three centuries. Through Jan. 5. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11:30 to 7:30.)

New York Academy of Sciences, 2 E. 63rd St.—"Strange Matter" revisits the inks and watercolors of Roz Chast. Through Jan. 10. (Open Mondays through Fridays, 10 to 5.)

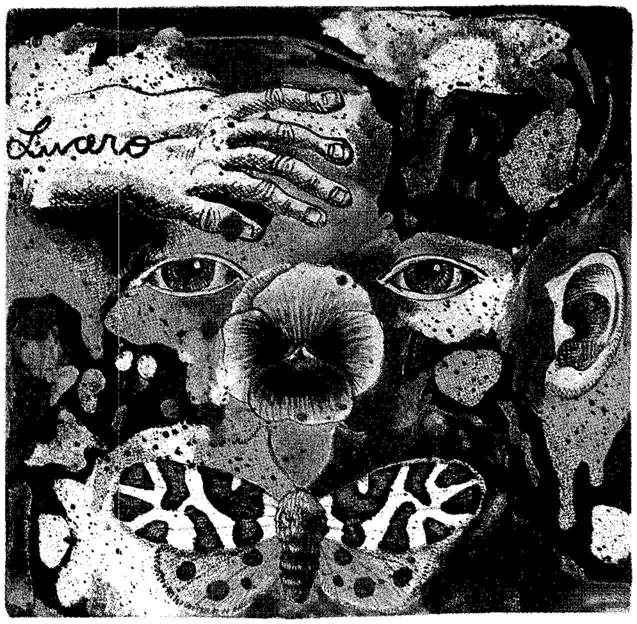
New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—"A History of Women Photographers" presents two hundred and eighteen artists who put out work between 1850 and 1975. Well-knowns (Cameron, Abbott, Lange, Model, Levitt, Arbus) mingle with near-unknowns (Sarah J. Eddy, Miss Eagle, Kate Smith) in slightly cramped quarters, but you'll find enough to linger over happily. Through Jan. 4. (Gottesman Exhibition Hall.) (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, uptown and downtown galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; Chelsea galleries are generally closed Tuesdays and open Sundays.)

Robert Heckes—Flawlessly executed collages made from the backs of playing cards. The empty, cartoonlike images—a Lichtenstein-style interior, a lady elephant, a totem pole—have a certain wacky charm, like the creations of a child with a strange, unwholesome hobby, but after you've admired their technique there isn't much else to do with them. Through Dec. 21. (Postmasters, 80 Greene St.)

Michael Lucero / Martin Mull—New, colorfully glazed ceramic sculptures that incorporate found objects. (See also the American Craft Museum.) / Recent watercolors and drawings, including a series inspired by the Samuel Beckett prose pieces "Texts for Nothing." Both shows through Dec. 21. (Beitzel, 102 Prince St.)



"Self-Portrait," by Michael Lucero (showing at Beitzel and the American Craft Museum).

Yasumasa Morimura—The subject matter for this exhibit by the highly accomplished Japanese conceptual artist is the whole history of the movies—or at least the female half of it. In a series of lavishly printed, oversized photographic prints, he re-creates some of the screen's most famous moments, casting himself in the starring roles: as Scarlett O'Hara, as Holly Golightly, as Cleopatra. The illusions are sometimes amazing, and the camera loves Morimura almost as much as he seems to love himself. Through Jan. 4. (Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St.)

Leslie Wayne—Tiny oil paintings with dense, sculptural textures, which seem to have an intense inner life. The artist takes sheets of dried oil-paint scum, slices and dices them, and then jumbles the result on panels as small as four by six inches. Some shimmer with masses of delicate filigree; others look like the work of a pasta machine gone mad. Through Dec. 21. (Shainman, 560 Broadway.)

Short List—**MARK BENNETT** and **LESLIE BRACK,** Keenan, 494 Broadway. Both shows through Dec. 21. . . . **MICHAEL BUSCH,** Conde, 588 Broadway. Through Jan. 4. . . . **DEBORAH BUTTERFIELD,** Thorp, 103 Prince St. Through Jan. 18. . . . **RICHARD CLEAVER,** Steinbaum Krauss, 132 Greene St. Through Jan. 4. . . . **ROBERT COLESCOTT,** Kind, 136 Greene St. Through Jan. 4. . . . **NICOLE EISENMAN,** Tilton, 49 Greene St. Through Jan. 11. . . . **LESLIE LERNER,** Rosenberg and Kaufman, 115 Wooster St. Through Jan. 4. . . . **JOSEPH MARIONI,** Blum, 99 Wooster St. Through Dec. 28. . . . **CHARLIE MILGRIM,** OK Harris, 383 West Broadway. Through Jan. 4. . . . **BRUCE NAUMAN,** Castelli, 420 West Broadway, and Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. Both shows through Dec. 14. . . . **JUSTIN NOVAK,** Synchronicity Space, 55 Mercer St. Through Jan. 4 . . . . **RICHARD PETTIBONE,** Marcus, 578 Broadway. Through Dec. 21. . . . **ADRIAN PIPER** and **SETON SMITH,** Weber, 142 Greene St. Both shows through Dec. 21. . . . **JONATHAN SELIGER,** Bravin Post Lee, 80 Mercer St. Through Dec. 21.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Gary Hill—Large-scale video installations. The most impressive, "Viewer," is a projected lineup of twenty-odd men, their approximately life-size figures contrasting sharply with the black background; initially they seem motionless, but one gradually becomes aware of slight movements, shifts in posture, facial tics. The lineup suggests a police procedure, but the impassive stolidity of the men is implicitly confrontational. Through Dec. 21. (Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. Open Tuesdays, closed Sundays.)

"Open Secrets: Seventy Pictures on Paper, 1815 to the Present"—An eclectic group of photographs and works on paper by canonical masters (Degas, Picasso, Matisse, Atget, Stieglitz, etc.) and by less familiar yet often eccentric and fascinating figures. Among the latter are Mrs. Ada Deane's 1931 "spirit image," a gelatin-silver print showing a cluster of faces hovering in an ectoplasmic cloud, and Frederick Sommer's 1939 photograph "Chicken," in which the head and some innards of the animal in question have been artfully arrayed on a grimy white background. Through Dec. 28. (Marks, in its second Chelsea space, at 523 W. 24th St. Open Tuesdays; closed Sundays.)

Short List—**ELLSWORTH KELLY,** Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. Closed Wednesdays; opens at noon; through Jan. 19. . . . **KK KOZIK,** Maynes, 529 W. 20th St. Through Jan. 12. . . . **ROBERT OVERBY,** Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. Through Jan. 12. . . . **ULF ROLLOF,** Morris Healy, 530 W. 22nd St. Through Jan. 12. . . . **SUE WILLIAMS,** 303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. Through Jan. 12. . . . **WILLIAM WOOD,** Kirkland, 504 W. 22nd St. Opens Sundays at noon; through Jan. 25.

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Jörg Immendorff—Grotesque drawings and a painting (all strongly reminiscent of the savage satires of another German, Georg Grosz) based on the artist's designs for a production of Stravinsky's opera "The Rake's Progress" at Salzburg in 1994. In a series of gouaches, Immendorff identifies himself with the opera's protagonist, Tom Rakewell; "In the House of Mother Goose," for example, shows him, in hideous whiteface, contemplating himself in a hand mirror that reflects the sly face of an ape. One wall is given over to a twenty-three-foot canvas of the stage as a battlefield, with the players revealed, often lewdly, from behind. Through Jan. 11. (Werner, 21 E. 67th St. Open Mondays.)

"New World Orders"—A fascinating, scholarly exhibition devoted to a weird genre of racist painting known as *casta* (Spanish for "caste"), which depicted every possible combination of intermingling between Spaniards, Indians, and African slaves in the Latin-American colonies. Each scene presents a man and a woman of different races with their offspring, and an ornate caption along the lines of "*De negro y española sale mulato*" ("From a black man and a Spanish woman comes a mulatto"). Though some of the classifications are fanciful or horrifying (the child of a black and an Indian was called a *lobo*—"wolf"), Mexican and Peruvian artists depicted their subjects with great reverence and affection. *Casta* paintings are among the few secular art works of the era, providing intimate glimpses of domestic interiors and of the colonial economy

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Medgar Evers was murdered
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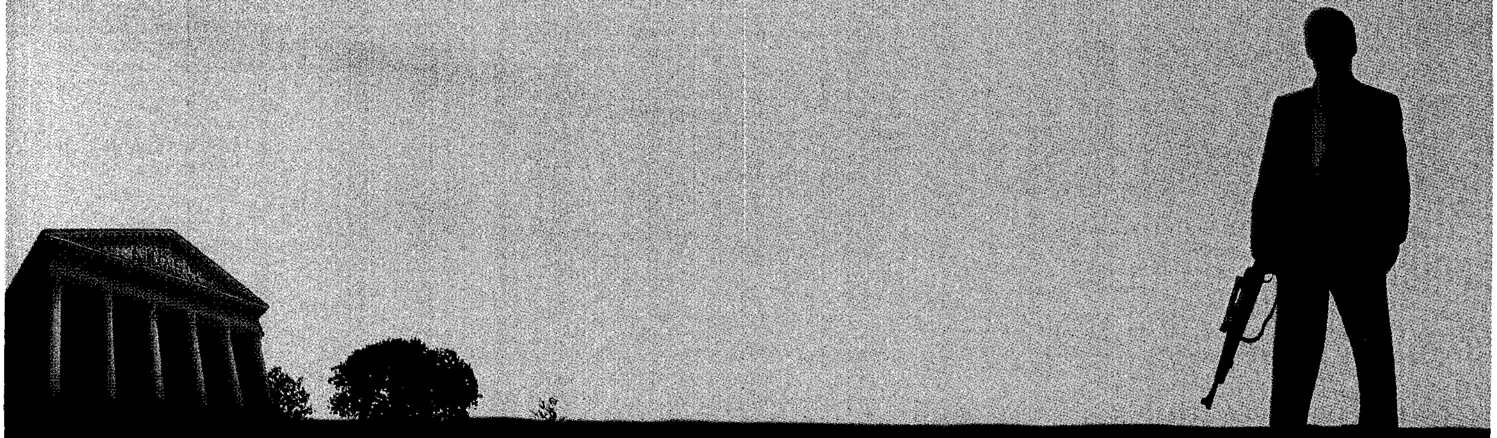

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Short List—**RICHARD BAKER,** Washburn, 20 W. 57th St. Through Jan 11. . . . **DAVID BIERK,** Associated American Artists, 20 W. 57th St. Through Jan. 11 . . . . **ELIZABETH BISHOP** and **ROBERT BORDO,** De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave, at 57th St. Both shows through Jan. 4. . . . **RONALD BLADEN,** Sculpture Center, 167 E. 69th St. Through Dec. 21. . . . **IRENE BUSZKO,** Tatistcheff, 50 W. 57th St. Through Dec. 28. . . . **JEAN-BAPTISTE-CAMILLE COROT** and **ROBERT DE NIRO,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. Open Mondays; through Jan. 13 and Dec. 28, respectively. . . . **JIM DINE,** Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. Through Jan. 11. . . . **ERIC FISCHL,** Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Through Dec. 21. . . . **SUZAN FRECON,** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St., and Markey, 55 Vandam St. Both shows through Jan. 11. . . . **ANDY GOLDSWORTHY,** Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. Through Jan. 4. . . . **REGINALD MARSH,** DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Through Dec. 28. . . . **PAULA REGO,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. Open Mondays; through Jan. 4. . . . **GRETCHEN DOW SIMPSON,** Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. Through Jan. 4. . . . **LEON POLK SMITH,** McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. Through Jan. 25. . . . **ZAO WOU-KI,** Krugier, 41 E. 57th St. Through Jan. 20.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Christie's—Dec. 12: Stamps. . . . Dec. 13-14: Twentieth-century decorative arts. Dec. 17: Rugs and carpets. . . . (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.) . . . ¶ At **CHRISTIE'S EAST:** Dec. 11: Antique jewelry. . . . Dec. 12: Antique toys. . . . Dec. 13: Animation art. . . . Dec. 16: A sale of twentieth-century decorative arts, particularly strong in Art Deco. (219 E. 67th St. 606-0400.)

Sotheby's—Dec. 11: Fabergé pieces and other Russian art works. . . . ¶ Dec. 12: A notable collection of English furniture and country-life paintings. . . . ¶ Dec. 13: Rugs and carpets. . . . ¶ Dec. 14: Animation art, toys, and dolls. . . . ¶ Dec. 16: An auction of coins. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

Doyle's—The Toys and Soldiers Museum of Vicksburg, Mississippi, is no more, and the items in its collection can now be yours. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730. Dec. 11-12.)

Phillips—Specimens from the realm of natural history. (406 E. 79th St. 570-4830. Dec. 14.)

Swann's—Early printed books. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710. Dec. 12.)

Christmas Antiques Show—You're sure to find an appropriate gift here, whether it be an ancient Egyptian sculpture, a Victorian watch fob, or a trayful of eighteenth-century Loo chips (it was a game, not a place). (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. Dec. 11-15. For information, call 472-1180.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Lynn Davis—The photographer's latest explorations—in earlier work she's captured icebergs, pyramids, and Southeast Asian temples—give us wildly handsome portraits of ancient ruins gracing the deserts of the Near East. Through Jan. 4. (Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St.)

Lisette Model (1901-83) / **Diane Arbus** (1923-71)—Well-known and virtually unknown vintage prints of vacationers on the Riviera, residents of the Lower East Side, and windows of New York storefronts. / "A Box of Ten Photographs," selected by Arbus (who was a student of Model's), includes some of her best-known portraits. Both shows through Jan. 11. (Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St.)

Margaret Watkins (1884-1969)—A gentle wit and confidence inform all these vintage prints from the twenties and early thirties. In "The Kitchen Sink," Watkins turns a quotidian basinful of dirty dishes into a delightfully loose melody. The warm-toned "Domestic Symphony" is a masterful marriage of off-center composition (it was deemed radical) with the delicate textures of porcelain, linen, and eggshells. Through Jan. 4. (Mann, 42 E. 76th St.)

"Pictorialism Into Modernism: The Clarence H. White School of Photography"—In courses at his own school, at Columbia University, and elsewhere, White (1871-1925) taught his students, the majority of them women, to cultivate "a sense of the beautiful." This show of more than a hundred works by his students and colleagues attests to their success. Laura Gilpin found ethereal beauty in Bryce Canyon, shown in soft focus under patchy cloud cover. Stella F. Simon found formal beauty in the corner of a room at the school's Harlem address. Paul Outerbridge, Jr., found slick beauty in a plate of cheese and crackers. Through Jan. 12. (International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

A Gertrude Arndt self-portrait, in "A History of Women Photographers," at the New York Public Library.

COLLECTION OF HELEN KORNBLUM, ST. LOUIS

"Women of the Clarence White School"—In the beginning (ca. 1914), female students outnumbered males two to one. On view here are works by Doris Ulmann, Anne W. Brigman, Margaret Watkins, Margaret Bourke-White, Dorothea Lange, and others. Through Jan. 18. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St.)

Short List—**ANSEL ADAMS,** Danziger, 130 Prince St. Through Jan. 11. . . . **JUAN CARLOS ALOM,** Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. Through Feb. 1. . . . **ELLEN CAREY,** Ricco/Maresca, 152 Wooster St. Through Dec. 21. . . . **PETAH COYNE** and **JULIA MARGARET CAMERON,** Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. Both shows through Dec. 28. . . . **MITCH EPSTEIN** and **VERA LUTTER,** Wooster Gardens, 558 Broadway. Both shows through Dec. 28. . . . **JILL FREEDMAN,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway. Through Jan. 11. . . . **LYNN GEESAMAN** and **EUGÈNE ATGET,** Richardson, 560 Broadway. Both shows through Jan. 11. . . . **NAN GOLDIN,** Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St. Through Dec. 21. . . . **JEAN KALLINA,** Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. Through Jan. 19. . . . **JILL KREMENTZ,** Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. Through Jan. 4. . . . **LINDA MC CARTNEY** and **TOM WOOD,** International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8; both shows through Feb. 9. . . . **MARTIN PARR,** Borden, 560 Broadway. Through Dec. 31. . . . **FAWN POTASH,** Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St. Through Jan. 18. . . . **PAUL SELIGMAN,** Modernage, 1150 Sixth Ave., at 44th St. Open weekdays, 8:30 to 6; through Dec. 27.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Jewish Museum, and the New York Public Library.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Alice Tully Hall is 875-5050; for Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030; and for Carnegie Hall, 247-7800.)

HOLIDAY CONCERTS

Handel's "Messiah"—The season continues. Dec. 11 at 6:30: William Trafka directs an audience sing-along. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St. Admission by contribution.) . . . ¶ Dec. 14-15 at 3: The Choir and Orchestra of Trinity Church, directed by Owen Burdick. (Broadway at Wall St. 602-0873. . . . **NOTE:** On Dec. 16 at 1, the same forces perform the Christmas portion only.) . . . ¶ Dec. 14 at 8: Martin Josman leads the National Chorale. (Avery Fisher Hall.) . . . ¶ Dec. 15 at 7:30: The Korean-American Peniel Concert Choir and Orchestra offers its tenth annual "Messiah," directed by Byung Choun Lee. (Avery Fisher Hall.) . . . ¶ Dec. 16 at 7:30: A sing-along, with Gwen Gould leading the West Village Chorale. (St. Luke In-the-Fields, 487 Hudson St., at Grove St. For information about tickets, call 570-7301.) . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 7:30: The St. Thomas Choir of Men and Boys, Concert Royal (a Baroque orchestra), and soloists Julianne Baird (soprano), Dana Marsh (countertenor), Gregory Carder (tenor), and Curtis Streetman (bass), directed by Gerre Hancock. (St. Thomas Church, Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. 757-7013, ext. 3027.) . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 8: The Oratorio Society of New York, directed by Lyndon Woodside, with soprano Jayne West, mezzo-soprano Rebecca Russell, tenor Stephen Tharp, and baritone Richard Zeller. (Carnegie Hall.)

Anonymous 4—The women's vocal quartet sings medieval Hungarian chant and polyphony of the Christmas season. (St. Michael's Church, Amsterdam Ave. at 99th St. 678-5432. Dec. 12-13 at 8.)

"The Other Wiseman"—A new opera by Stefania de Kenessey (to a libretto by Peter Wallace) which tells the tale of a fourth magus who never reached Bethlehem. Two other premières complete the program: Robert Mitchell's dramatic song cycle "Twice Dead" and Lou Rodgers's "Nights of Annabel Lee." Presented by Golden Fleece Ltd. (Sanford Meisner Theatre, 164 Eleventh Ave., at 22nd St. 691-6105. Dec. 12-13 at 8 and Dec. 14-15 at 3 and 8.)

Russian Chamber Chorus of New York—An all-Tchaikovsky concert, including his Vespers (Op. 52). (Catholic Center at New York University, 58 Washington Sq. S. Dec. 12 at 8. Tickets at the door. . . . ¶ St. Ignatius Episcopal Church, West End Ave. at 87th St. Dec. 14 at 4. Tickets at the door.)

Grace Church Choral Society and Orchestra—Bruce McInnes leads the first three cantatas of Bach's "Christmas Oratorio." (Grace Church, Broadway at 10th St. 254-2000. Dec. 13 at 7:30.)

Dessoff Choirs—Monteverdi's Christmas Vespers (for double chorus, soloists, and orchestra) is the centerpiece of a program that also includes seasonal works by Bruckner, Mendelssohn, and Schütz. Kent Tritle directs. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Dec. 13-14 at 8. For information about tickets, call 935-2551.)

New York Pops—Skitch Henderson leads a program of Yuletide favorites, with the Phoenix Chorale. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 13-14 at 8.)

Columbia Candlelight Concert—The Barnard-Columbia Chorus and the St. Paul's Chapel Baroque Orchestra present Bach's F-Major Mass and the fourth cantata of his "Christmas Oratorio," as well as Stravinsky's Cantata and Poulenc's "Hodie," with Gail Archer directing. (St. Paul's Chapel, Columbia University, enter at Broadway and 116th St. 854-1540. Dec. 13-14 at 8.)

New Amsterdam Singers—Clara Longstreth leads seasonal selections by Bach, Brahms, Bruckner, and Britten ("A Ceremony of Carols"). (Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Central Park W. at 65th St. Dec. 13 at 8 and Dec. 15 at 4, with carolling following the Sunday performance.)

Little Orchestra Society and Metropolitan Singers/The Greek Choral Society—Dino Anagnost leads a wide-ranging candlelit concert in a spectacular setting. (Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, 319 E. 74th St. Dec. 14 at 7. For information about tickets, call 704-2100.)

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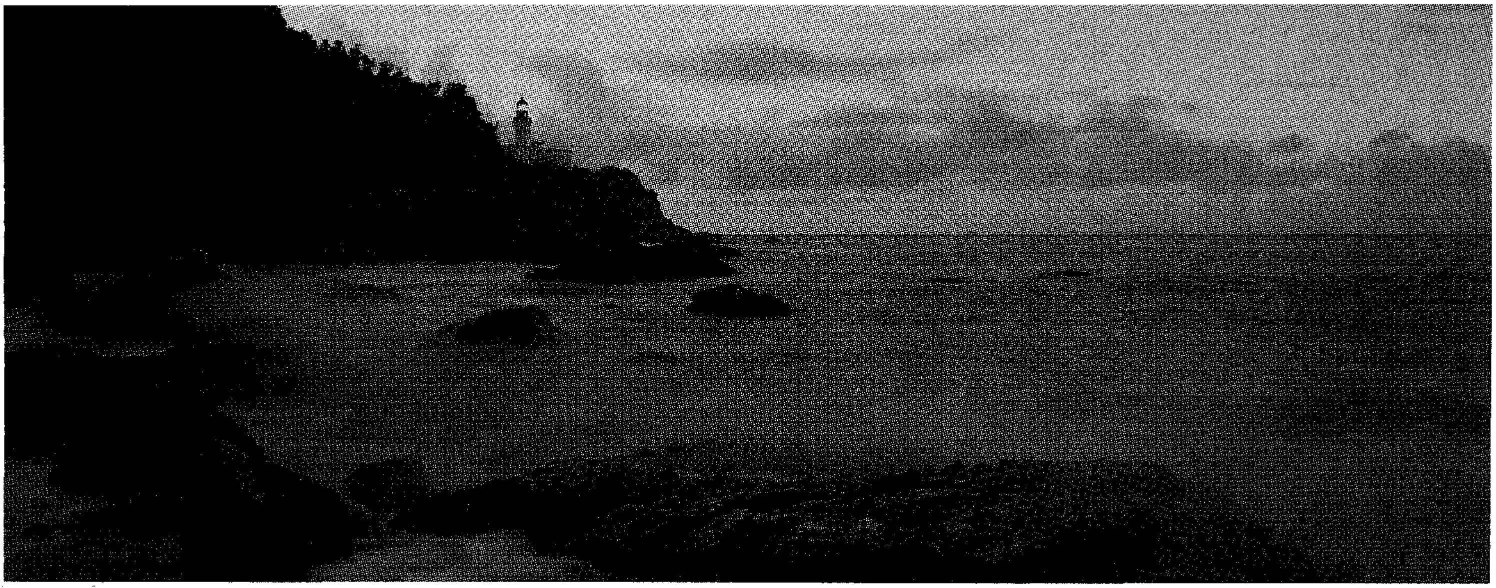

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STONEWALL CHORALE AND NEW YORK CITY GAY MEN'S CHORUS—A program of Eastern European music includes Rachmaninoff's "Gloria in Excelsis" (from his Vespers) and Paul Tschesnokoff's "Let Thy Holy Presence." (Haft Auditorium, Fashion Institute of Technology, 227 W. 27th St. Dec. 15 at 3. For information about tickets, call 971-5813.)

CHOIRS OF THE CHURCH OF ST. LUKE IN-THE-FIELDS—David Shuler leads Britten's "A Ceremony of Carols," among other works. (487 Hudson St., at Grove St. 633-2167. Dec. 15 at 4.)

BALTIMORE CONSORT—This sextet offers a credible crossover philosophy of early-music performance: a thorough grounding in European and American folk styles informs its interpretations of Renaissance music. The program features carols and other holiday music from times and places as disparate as sixteenth-century France and twentieth-century Kentucky, and, as always, it includes the sweet singing of soprano Custer LaRue and the spectacular and imaginative virtuosity of flutist Chris Norman. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Dec. 15 at 5.)

POMERIUM—The early-music singers offer Christmas works by Dufay, Byrd, Lasso, and others. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Dec. 15 at 6:30 and 8:30.)

VIENNA CHOIR BOYS—An annual Christmas sweet at Carnegie Hall, this year in a program that includes Britten's Missa Brevis. (Dec. 15 at 7:30.)

CONCERT ROYAL—James Richman leads the period-instrument group in Baroque Christmas music, including Corelli's "Christmas" Concerto and Alessandro Scarlatti's "Cantata Pastorale per la Natività di Nostro Signore Gesu Cristo" (with soprano Julianne Baird). (Alice Tully Hall. Dec. 16 at 8.)

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA—A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, by Britten, with Sylvia McNair, Nancy Gustafson, Jane Bunnell, Derek Lee Ragin, Kurt Streit, Rodney Gilfry, and Peter Rose; conducted by David Atherton. (Dec. 11 at 8.) . . . With Jochen Kowalski instead of Mr. Ragin. (Dec. 14 at 8.) . . . **RIGOLETTO,** with Ruth Ann Swenson, Ramón Vargas, and Leo Nucci; Carlo Rizzi. (Dec. 12 at 8.) . . . With Mary Dunleavy instead of Ms. Swenson. (Dec. 17 at 7:30.) . . . **TOSCA,** with Carol Vaness, Vincenzo La Scola, and Jean-Philippe Lafont; Christian Badea. (Dec. 13 at 8 and Dec. 16 at 7:30.) . . . **L'ELISIR D'AMORE,** with Andrea Rost, Richard Leech, Gino Quilico, and Mr. Nucci; Mr. Rizzi. (Dec. 14 at 1:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

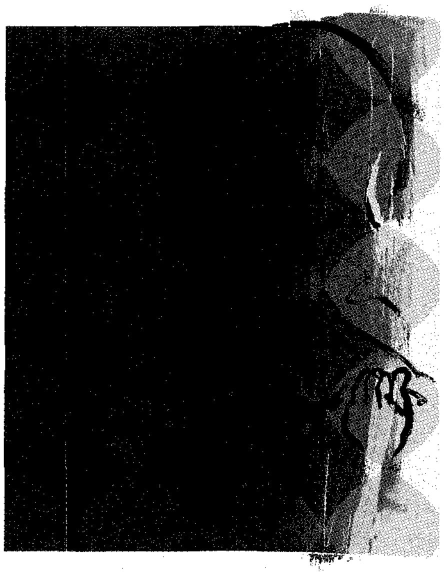
MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC OPERA THEATRE—Presenting Britten's "Albert Herring." (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. 749-2802, ext. 428. Dec. 11 and Dec. 13 at 8 and Dec. 14 at 4.)

AMATO OPERA COMPANY—Performing "La Bohème." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Dec. 13-14 at 7:30. Through Dec. 29.)

DICAPO OPERA THEATRE—Presenting "Die Fledermaus," in English. (184 E. 76th St. 288-9438. Dec. 13-14 at 8 and Dec. 15 at 3. Through Dec. 21.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC—Rimsky-Korsakov had a mania for prettifying Mussorgsky's music, fearing (perhaps rightly) that it was too rugged for audiences of his day to bear. For several decades, the sheet music for Mussorgsky's 1874 piano suite, "Pictures at an Exhibition," could only be acquired in Rimsky-Korsakov's somewhat sanitized edition; that's the version that served as the basis for the acclaimed Ravel orchestration that we commonly hear today. Among the many others who have also tried their hand at orchestrating "Pictures," the late Russian composer Sergei Gorchakov deserves special note: his 1954 version, based on Mussorgsky's piano edition, respects the power of the original. Kurt Masur swore off Ravel's version some years ago (he admires it, but finds it un-Russian) and now conducts only Gorchakov's realization, as he will in these performances. Also on the program are Stravinsky's "Pulcinella" Suite and Schnittke's Viola Concerto (with Yuri Bashmet, for whom it was composed, in 1985). (Avery Fisher Hall. Dec. 12 at 8, Dec. 13 at 11 A.M., and Dec. 17 at 7:30.)



Yuri Bashmet, appearing with the New York Philharmonic.

DEMETRIOS PSILLOS

BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA—Pianist Martha Argerich has declined to honor her engagement with the orchestra, so the young Russian pianist Arcadi Volodos appears instead, as the soloist in Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2. The program concludes with Act II of Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker." Seiji Ozawa conducts. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 11-12 at 8.)

ASCENSION MUSIC—The choir, orchestra, and soloists perform Bach's B-Minor Mass. (Church of the Ascension, Fifth Ave. at 10th St. 254-8553. Dec. 12 at 8.)

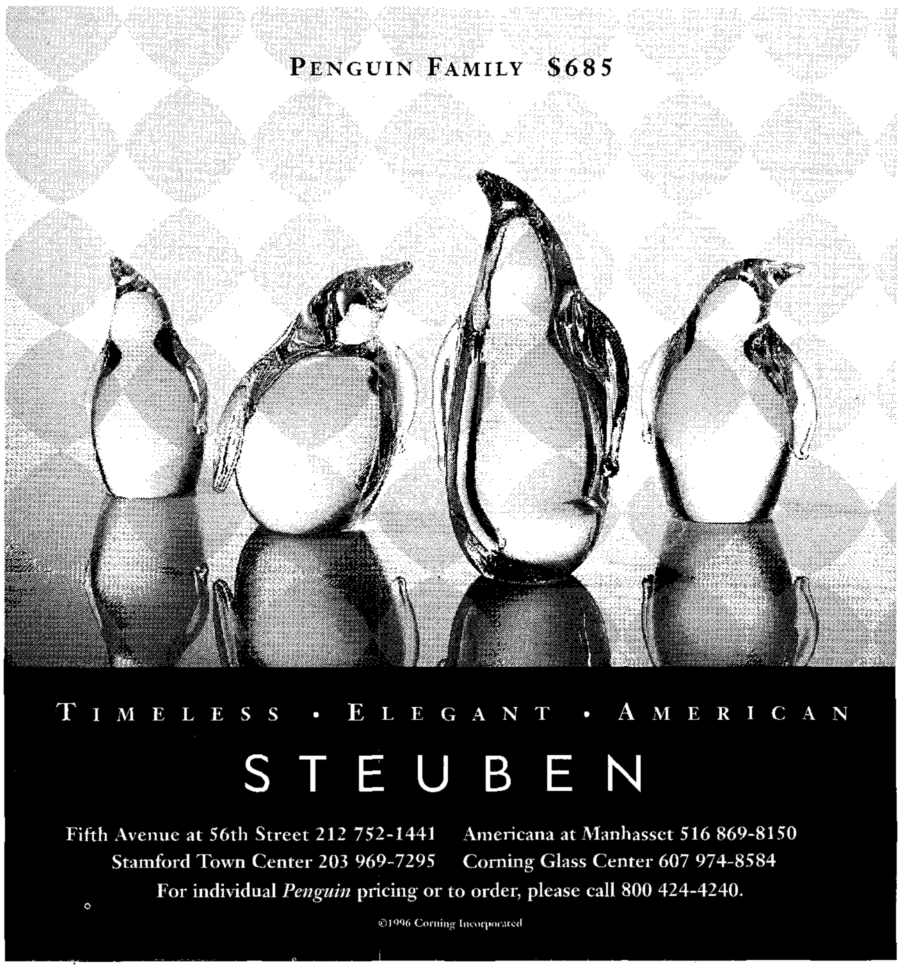
RIVERSIDE CHORAL SOCIETY—When Mozart died, two hundred and five years ago this month, he left his Requiem unfinished. It is most often performed as it was completed by his student Franz Xaver Süssmayr, but a recent version by the pianist and scholar Robert Levin may give the traditional edition a run for its money. In this concert, Patrick Gardner directs the chorus and orchestra, with soloists Mary Ellen Callahan (soprano), Judith Malafronte (mezzo-soprano), Frederick Urrey (tenor), and Richard Crist (bass), in the Mozart/Levin Requiem, as well as in Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola (featuring Krista Bennion-Feeney and Louise Schulman) and Haydn's Te Deum. (Church of the Heavenly Rest, Fifth Ave. at 90th St. 780-2181. Dec. 14 at 8.)

DI GOLDENE KEYT—This thirty-member Yiddish chorale offers its first concert, under the direction of Zalmen Mlotek. Included on the program is Maurice Rauch's folk oratorio "Fun Viglid biz Ziglid" (presented in English under the title "From Lullaby to Victory Hymn"), featuring Tovah Feldshuh as narrator. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Dec. 15 at 3.)

ARTE CORALE—In its New York début recital, the ten-member Russian Orthodox men's choir (the resident ensemble at Moscow's Archangel Gabriel Church) performs religious music from the Middle Ages through the seventeenth century. Presented by Music Before 1800. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 666-9266. Dec. 15 at 4.)

CENTRAL CITY CHORUS—Charles Pilling directs a program that includes Mozart's "Vesperae Solennes de Confessore" and Haydn's "Nelson" Mass. (Central Presbyterian Church, Park Ave. at 64th St. Dec. 15 at 7.)

ORCHESTRA OF ST. LUKE'S—André Previn conducts Vaughan Williams's "Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis," Britten's orchestral song cycle "Les Illuminations" (on texts by Rimbaud,



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and here featuring soprano Sylvia McNair), and Haydn's Symphony No. 102. (Carnegie Hall. December 16 at 8.)

Manhattan School of Music Symphony—Kurt Masur conducts Schnittke's "(K)ein Sommernachtstraum," Ravel's Piano Concerto for the Left Hand (with Bing Han), and Schumann's Symphony No. 4. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. Dec. 16 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

RECITALS

Naumburg Celebration—The Walter W. Naumburg Foundation was established in 1926 to support the careers of aspiring musicians. The roster of performers for this seventieth-anniversary benefit concert attests to the kind of excellence the organization has fostered over the years: singers Faith Esham, Stanford Olsen, and Dawn Upshaw; pianists Leonid Hambro, Stephen Hough, Anton Nel, and André-Michel Schub; violinists Elmar Oliveira and Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg; clarinettist Charles Neidich; guitarist Jorge Caballero; and members of numerous chamber ensembles, including the Brentano, Cavani, Emerson, Lark, and Ying string quartets. (Alice Tully Hall. Dec. 11 at 7:30.)

Bargemusic—Clarinettist Charles Neidich and pianist Robert Kulek perform Brahms's F-Minor Sonata; violist Toby Hoffman joins them for trios by Mozart (the "Kegelstatt"), Schumann (his "Märchenerzählungen"), and György Kurtág (his "Hommage to Robert Schumann"). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. Dec. 12 at 7:30 and Dec. 15 at 4.)

Juilliard String Quartet—Performing Bartók's Quartets No. 2, No. 4, and No. 6. (Alice Tully Hall. Dec. 13 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

Jody Karin Applebaum and Marc-André Hamelin—The soprano and the pianist (the latter finally gaining overdue international recognition) offer cabaret fare by Poulenc, Satie, Schoenberg, Weill, Gershwin, Bolcom, Sondheim, and others. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. Dec. 13 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

Beaux Arts Trio—The ensemble performs four piano trios by Beethoven: two in E-Flat Major (Op. 1, No. 1, and WoO 38) and one each in B-Flat Major (Op. 11) and D Major (Op. 70, No. 1, the "Ghost"). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Dec. 13-14 at 8.)

John Aler—The tenor, assisted by pianist Kenneth Merrill and flutist Marina Piccinini, offers songs by Frank Martin (his "Chants de Noël"), Schumann ("Dichterliebe"), and others. (Alice Tully Hall. Dec. 15 at 2.)

Ljuba Kazarnovskaya—The soprano embarks on a five-concert survey of all of Tchaikovsky's one hundred and three songs. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Dec. 15 at 5.)

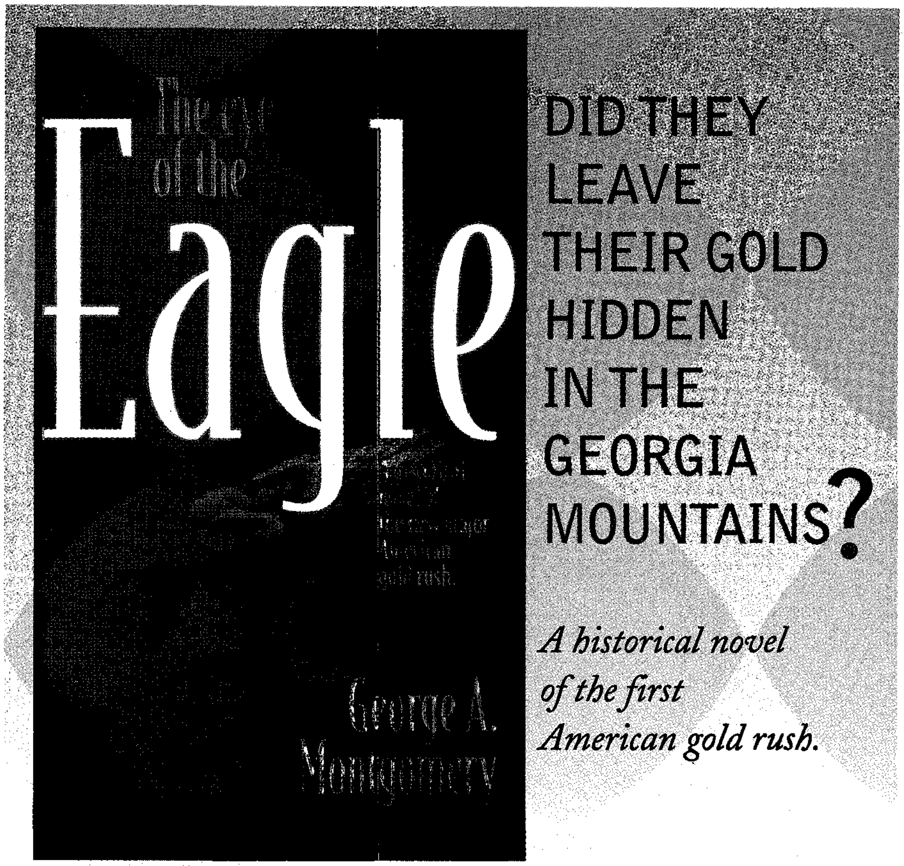
Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—Presenting all six of Bach's "Brandenburg" Concertos. (Alice Tully Hall. Dec. 15 at 5 and Dec. 17 at 7:30.)

Malcolm Bilson and Robert Levin—An hour-long all-Schubert recital by the two fortepianists includes both of the composer's principal four-hand masterworks, the F-Minor Fantasia and the "Grand Duo." (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Dec. 16 at 7.)

Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio—The group offers Brahms's C-Minor Piano Trio; violist Michael Tree assists in Schumann's Piano Quartet; and violinist Arnold Steinhardt completes the ensemble for Dvořák's A-Major Piano Quintet (Op. 81). (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Dec. 17-18 at 8.)

ALSO OF INTEREST

NEW YORK PHILOMUSICA: Haydn, d'Indy, Beethoven, and Brahms. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Dec. 12 at 8.) . . . **SUNDAYS ON THE ISLAND:** Flute trios. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. Dec. 15 at noon.) . . . **NEW YORK YOUTH SYMPHONY:** Saint-Saëns's "Organ" Symphony and a new work by Theodore Shapiro (with



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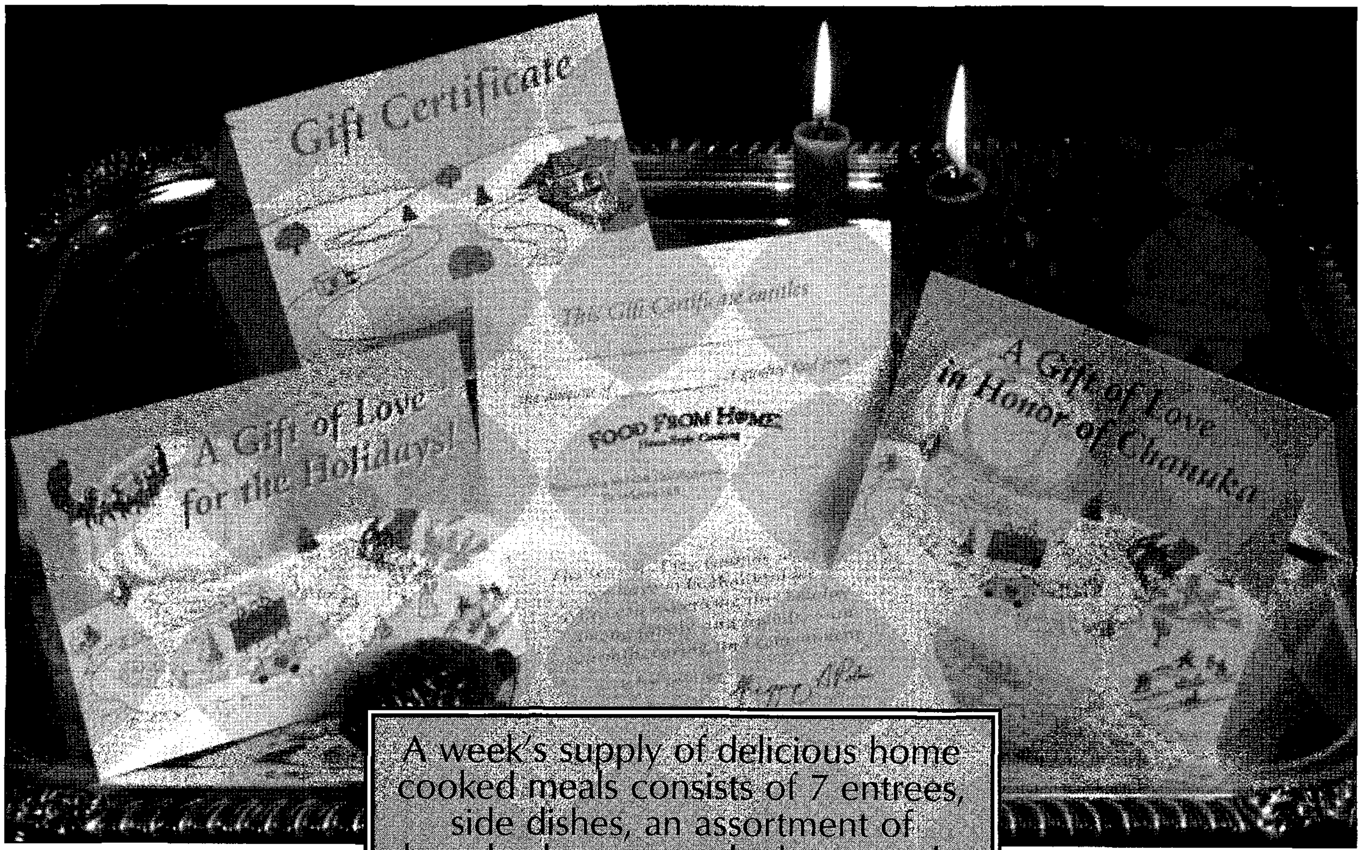
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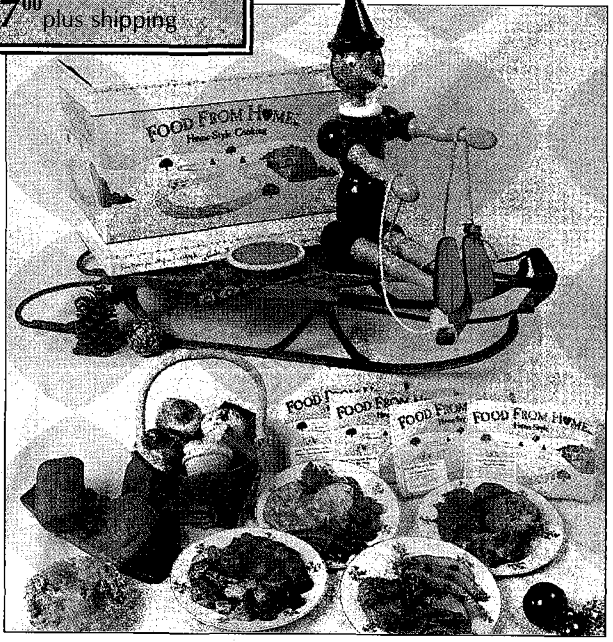
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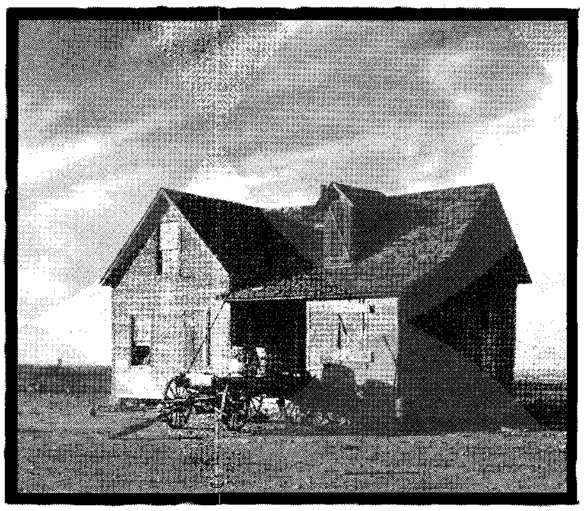

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flutist Eugenia Zukerman). (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 15 at 3. For information about free tickets, call 581-5933.) . . . **MUSIC AT HOLY TRINITY:** Brass and organ. (316 E. 88th St. Dec. 15 at 4. Tickets at the door.) . . . **DAVID SALIAMONAS:** Pianist. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Dec. 15 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.) . . . **JUPITER SYMPHONY:** Beethoven and Bruch. (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. Dec. 16 at 7. For information about tickets, call 799-1259. A benefit concert.) . . . **YAEL WEISS:** Pianist. (Mansfield Hotel, 12 W. 44th St. Dec. 16 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

TWENTY QUESTIONS—For the past sixteen years, the actress, playwright, and performance artist Anna Deavere Smith has been engaged in a project she calls "On the Road: A Search for American Character," in which she roams the country interviewing people; her solo stage pieces ("Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights, Brooklyn and Other Identities," "Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992") are put together from these interviews. On December 11 at 6, she winds up her term as artist-in-residence at New York University's Institute of Afro-American Affairs by presenting bits of her research that haven't made it onto the boards—performing, in essence, passages from her personal notebooks. "Normally I wouldn't have a chance to do these live," she says, "but because the spoken word is so important to me I want to be able to put them into speech." She may also interview someone from the audience. If you are chosen, just relax and speak naturally, for, as she explains, "the American character lives in broken sentences—not in perfect syntax, but in the place where it breaks down." (Vanderbilt Hall, New York University, 40 Washington Sq. S. No tickets necessary.)

BATTERY-POWERED CAROLLING—In a new holiday piece, the composer Phil Kline ushers a bevy of boom-box-toting friends and other participants in a candlelit procession from Columbus Circle through Central Park. If you bring your own boom box, you'll receive a tape (yours to keep) of one of five tracks of the thirty-minute ambient work and the chance to join in the "performance," which ends at Wollman Rink with a dance by the Ice Theatre of New York. (Dec. 12 at 7. For information, call 206-6674, ext. 200.)

NIGHT SERVICES—The Poetry Project presents two events to help fill the hours of lengthening darkness. Dec. 13 at 10:30 P.M.: The novelist Shashi Tharoor joins the poets Meena Alexander, Vijay Seshadri, and Vipin in a reading from their latest works. . . . ¶ Dec. 16 at 8: Downtown literati (Tracie Morris, Jessica Hagedorn, Eve Packer, David Henderson, Dominique, Bob Holman, and others) rally round Steve Cannon in a reading celebrating the republication of the local icon's scatological 1969 novel, "Groove, Bang and Jive Around." (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door.)

MORE READINGS—Dec. 15 at 3: Harold Ambler and Keith Dunlap read from their fiction. (Pink Pony Café, 176 Ludlow St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Dec. 16 at 7: Albany novelist William Kennedy reads from his latest book. (Vanderbilt Hall, New York University, 40 Washington Sq. S. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 7: Ellen Pall reads from her novel "Among the Ginzburgs." (Penny Liebman Contemporary Art, 60 W. 76th St. No tickets necessary.)

TALK—Dec. 12 at 6:30: Amei Wallach moderates a panel discussion by fellow-biographers John Richardson, Gail Levin, Mark Stevens, Annalyn Swan, and Patricia Bosworth on the question of what needs to be known about the lives of our artists. (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 343-1735.)

WALK—Dec. 12 at 10: Howard Goldberg, of Adventure on a Shoestring, leads a tour of Hoboken to mark the birthday of Frank Sinatra, who got his start on those streets eighty-one years ago. For information, call 265-2663.

Spirits and S

By Ralph DiGennaro

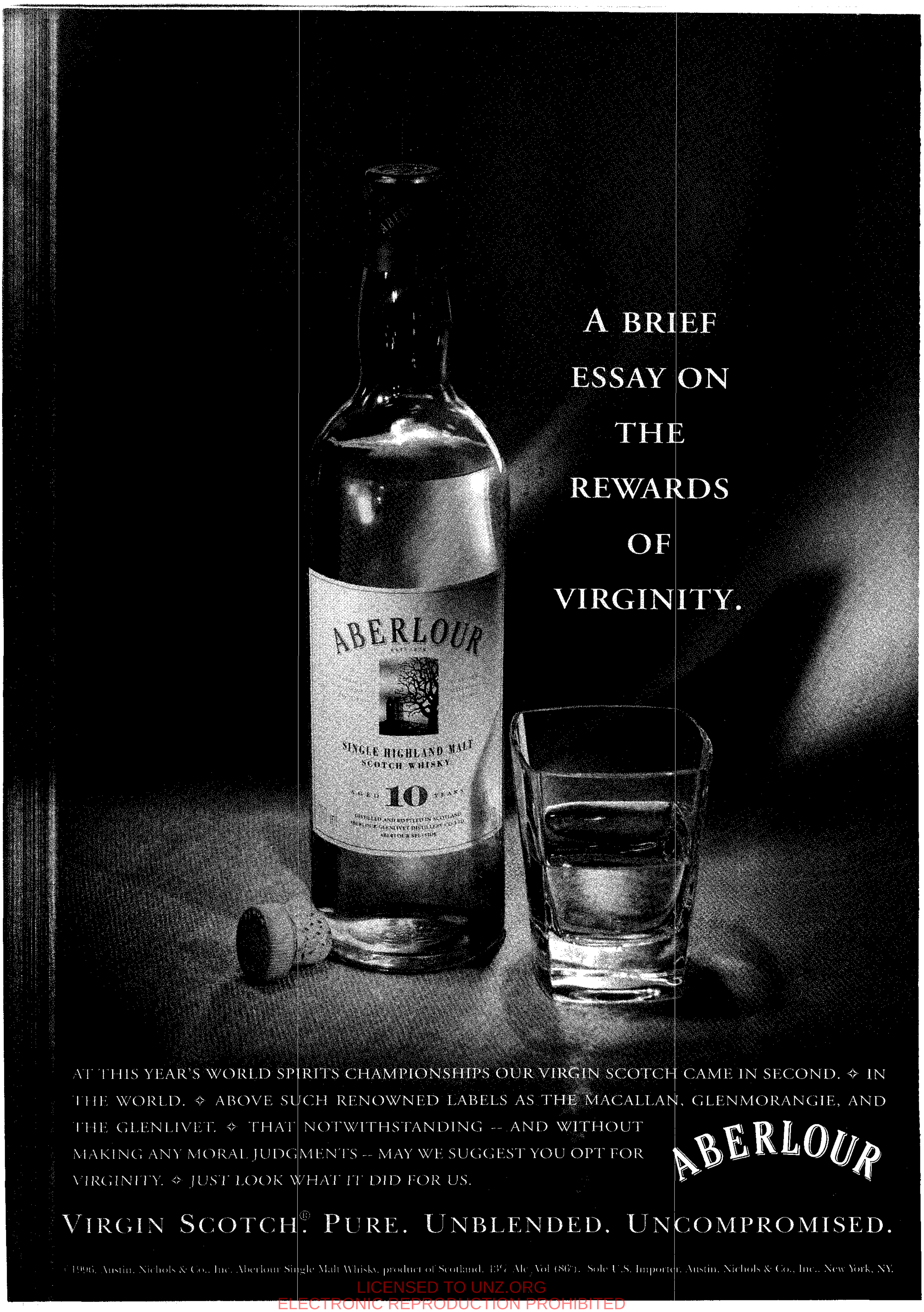
It should come as a surprise to no one that, of late, cigar smoking has become something of a minor obsession across America. To be sure, the pleasures of a handmade cigar, paired, invariably, with a glass of single-malt scotch, fine cognac, or vintage port, have struck a responsive chord in the hearts and minds of upcoming corporate types, many of whom are still smarting over the loss of the many and varied "politically incorrect" indulgences that defined the eighties.

Today, the cigar in many ways symbolizes something of a revolution, a chance to blow smoke in the face, so to speak, of those who ushered in the "less is more" nineties sensibility in the first place. One can practically hear the male bonding going on ever since a man named Marvin Shanken created *Cigar Aficionado,* a magazine for the cigar-crazed.

Mercifully, enjoying life's luxuries is no longer viewed as tantamount to treason, as witnessed by the proliferation of cigar bars in urban cities from coast to coast. Indeed, cigar bars may well usurp health clubs and fitness

vira
LAURITA

Photos: Genil & Hyers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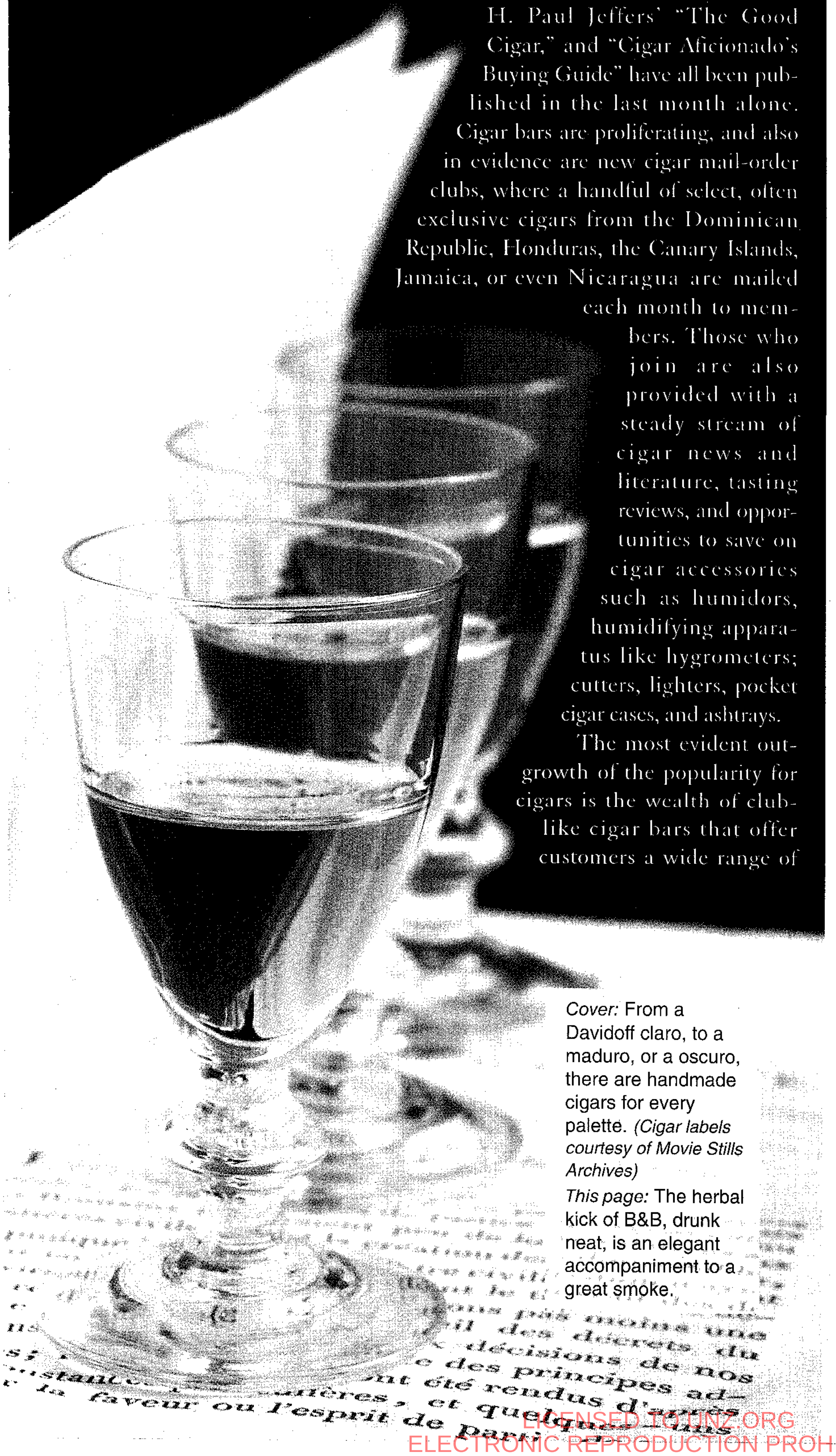
centers as the new venues of choice for business meetings and networking. And why not? Few things in life can offer as much enjoyment for $10 or less as a good cigar. And the pleasures are even greater when there is a fine spirit to enjoy along with it.

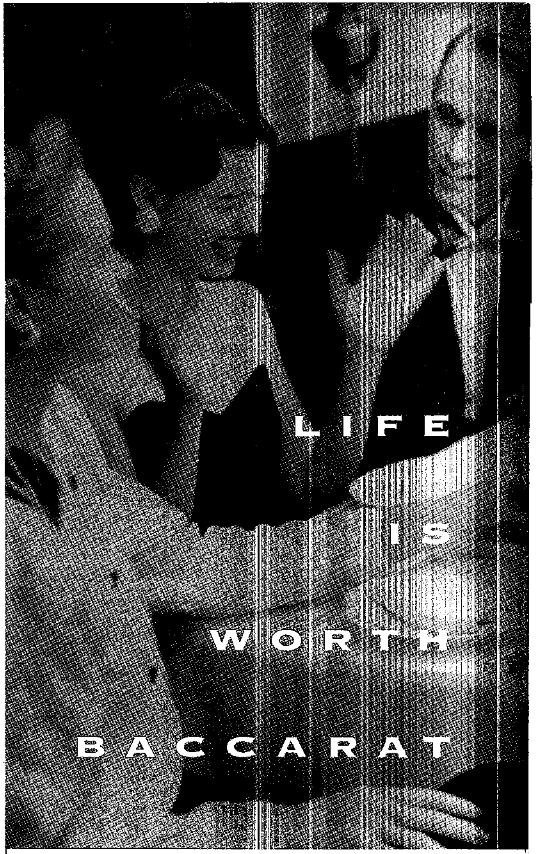
Clearly, a singular passion abounds for cigars, among both men and women. From lifelong enthusiasts to the recently converted, there is a discernible quest for new knowledge and information so that the luxuries of lighting up may be that much more pleasurable. Cigar books of all shapes and sizes have been selling briskly, popping up in bookstores as fast as tobacco plants in the Dominican Republic. To wit, Barnaby Conrad's "History of Fine Smoking," H. Paul Jeffers' "The Good Cigar," and "Cigar Aficionado's Buying Guide" have all been published in the last month alone. Cigar bars are proliferating, and also in evidence are new cigar mail-order clubs, where a handful of select, often exclusive cigars from the Dominican Republic, Honduras, the Canary Islands, Jamaica, or even Nicaragua are mailed each month to members. Those who join are also provided with a steady stream of cigar news and literature, tasting reviews, and opportunities to save on cigar accessories such as humidors, humidifying apparatus like hygrometers; cutters, lighters, pocket cigar cases, and ashtrays.

The most evident outgrowth of the popularity for cigars is the wealth of club-like cigar bars that offer customers a wide range of



Cover: From a Davidoff claro, to a maduro, or a oscuro, there are handmade cigars for every palette. *(Cigar labels courtesy of Movie Stills Archives)*

This page: The herbal kick of B&B, drunk neat, is an elegant accompaniment to a great smoke.



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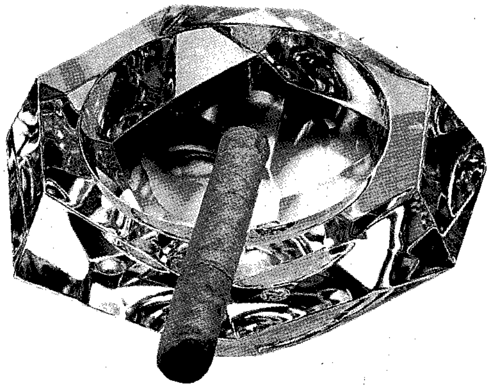

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single-malt scotches, wines, ports, sherries, and beers. One of the most impressive and elegant is the Club Macanudo, which opened in May on Manhattan's swanky Upper East Side, just off Madison Avenue. In this 3,000-square-foot stogie sanctuary, individual cigars can run as high as $35. Walls are lined with 500 personal mahogany and Spanish cedar humidors including those of Hollywood heavies Tom Selleck, Matt Dillon, Michael Nouri, and Francis Ford Coppola. Joining this starry universe with "cigar keeps" are fashion moguls Ralph Lauren and Tommy Hilfiger.

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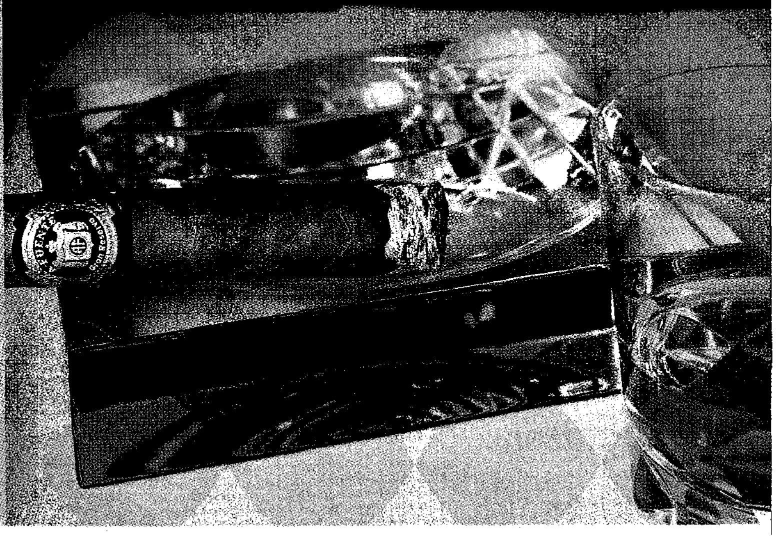

Right: Crystal cigar ashtray by Baccarat, "The Crystal of Kings" since 1785. *Far right:* Smooth as a Macanudo corona and every bit as earthy is Jameson Irish whiskey, sipped from a crystal tumbler.

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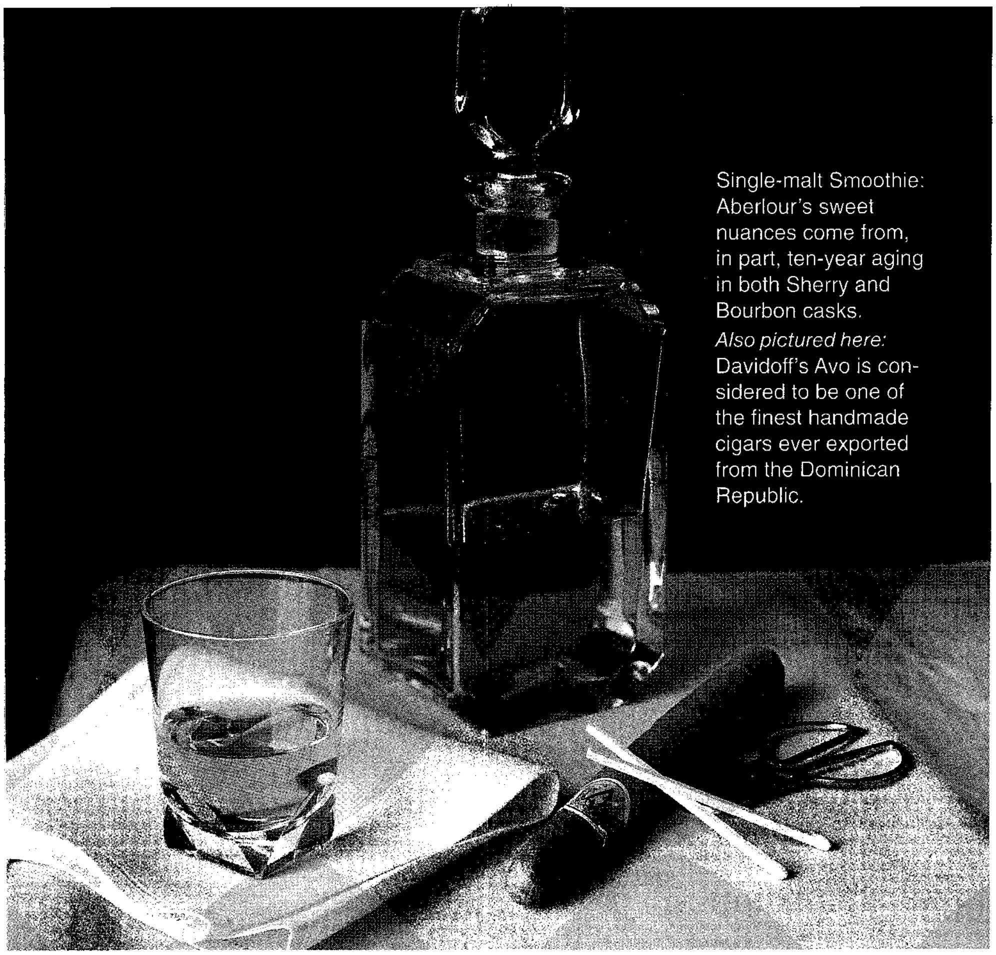
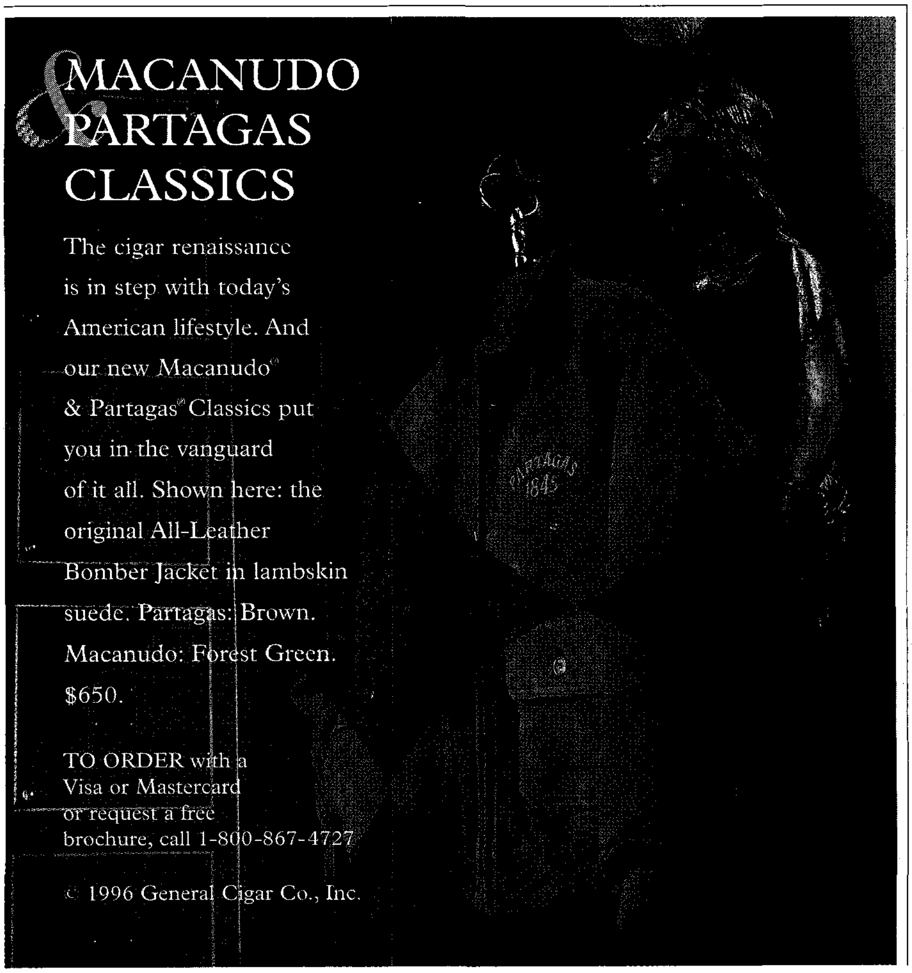


Single-malt Smoothie: Aberlour's sweet nuances come from, in part, ten-year aging in both Sherry and Bourbon casks.

Also pictured here: Davidoff's Avo is considered to be one of the finest handmade cigars ever exported from the Dominican Republic.



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and corporate puffers Ron Perlman, Fay Vincent, and Jerry della Femina to name just a few.

Just as men and women have learned to recognize and appreciate well made, hand-rolled cigars of quality tobacco—exemplary binder, filler, and wrapper, in cigar lingo—so too are they up on the elegant accessories that are a must for cigar lovers. Fortunately, specialty shops such as Davidoff of Geneva stock everything the discerning cigar lover could want, from highly select handmade cigars out of the Dominican Republic, Honduras, and the Canary Islands—kept at perfectly humidified temperatures—to expertly crafted and finished humidors of rare and exotic woods. Davidoff is also the source for precision cutters, leather cigar carrying cases, lead crystal cigar ashtrays, and even 18k gold cuff links.

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Conversations about cigars would not be complete if they did not include certain libations that pair so well with the experience of a good smoke. With the surging popularity of cigars, special liquors are also enjoying a new acceptance among the smoke set, particularly great sipping spirits such as single-malt scotches and Irish whiskey. One of the hottest single malts these days is Aberlour, a ten-year-old Highland Scotch whisky aged in a careful balance of Sherry and Bourbon casks. Water from natural springs, mash from malted barley, and spoke from burning peat all contribute to the buttery smoothness and distinct character of a silky finish that marries well with fine tobacco.

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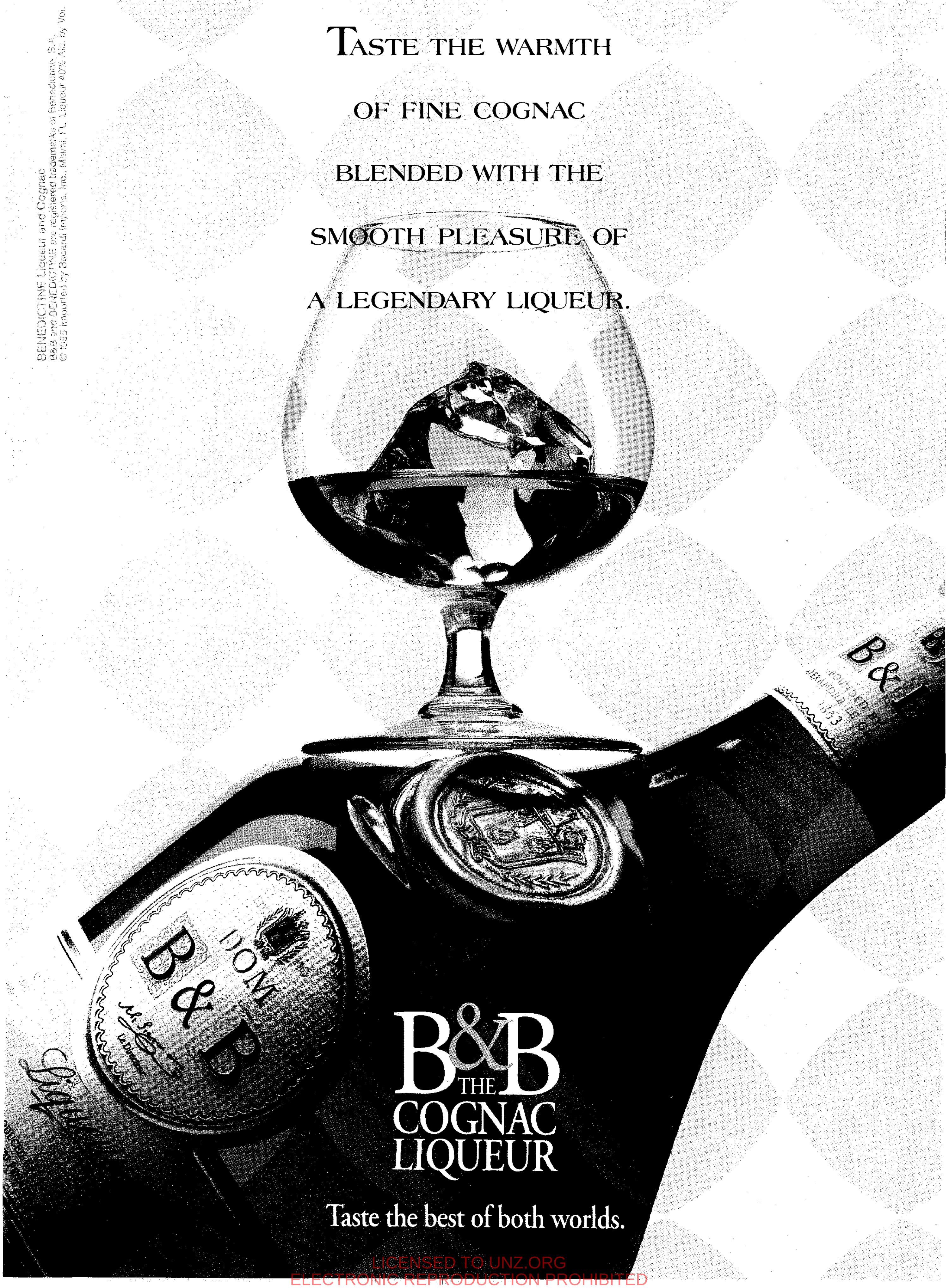
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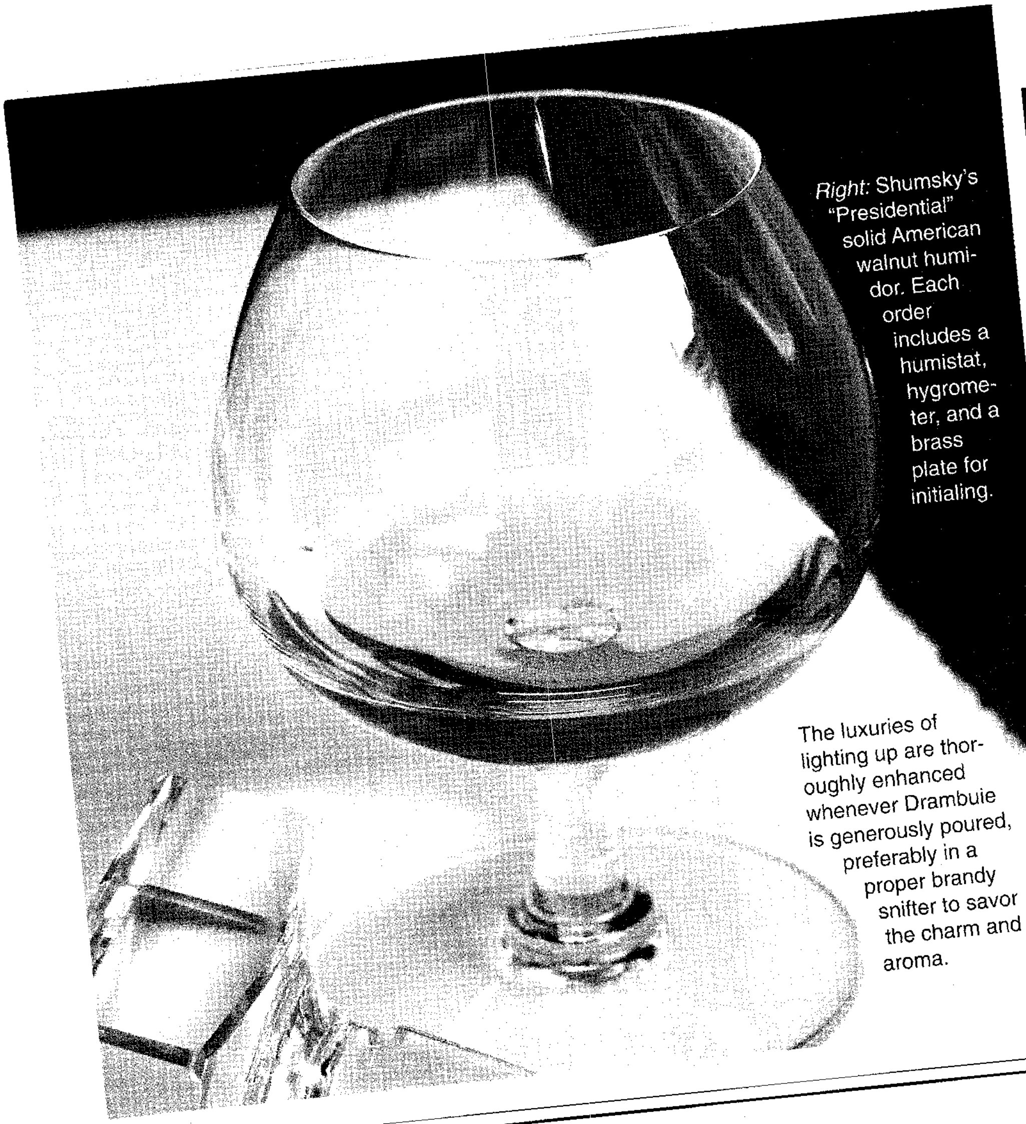
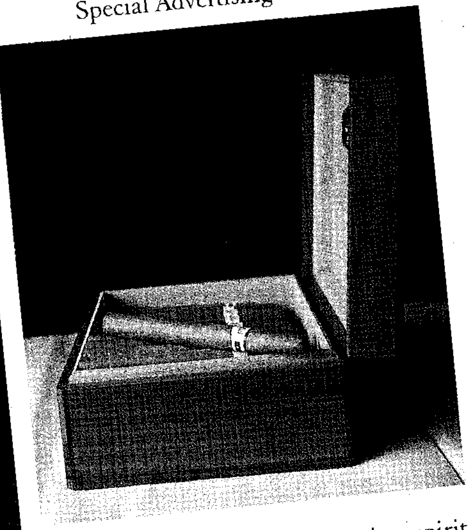


The luxuries of lighting up are thoroughly enhanced whenever Drambuie is generously poured, preferably in a proper brandy snifter to savor the charm and aroma.



Right: Shumsky's "Presidential" solid American walnut humidor. Each order includes a humistat, hygrometer, and a brass plate for initialing.

No more smooth a sipping spirit is there than Jameson Irish whiskey, the distillery established by John Jameson more than two centuries ago in Dublin. Still made the same way today, from a mixture of malted and unmalted barley closely dried in hot-air kilns without the presence of peat smoke, this triple-distilled whiskey is a smooth, mellow spirit with a sweet, woody aftertaste that thoroughly enhances the fine aromas of a cigar. For those who can't get too much of a good thing, Jameson also produces an Irish whiskey, aged twelve years called 1780 Reserve, delicate and aromatic enough to be enjoyed in a snifter like a fine brandy or Armagnac.

If liqueur is more to one's liking, some are standouts as accompaniments to a great smoke. B & B, an artful blend of Benedictine liqueur and French cognac, deliciously combines herbs and spices in a single spirit that may be sipped neat or enjoyed in a snifter to better take in the exotic aromas. Cigar aficionados have been known to soak the cut end of their cigar in B & B to further enjoy the blending of tobacco, spice, and oak.

On the subject of tobacco and spice, another classic spirit that goes well with an after-dinner cigar is Drambuie. A tasty alternative to French cognac, Spanish brandy, or port, it is a blend of fine scotch, heather honey, and herbs. Drambuie has, over the years, been the favorite libation of a Duke or two who no doubt indulged while smoking a double corona in the cavernous environs of a castle on the moors—political correctness be damned. ◆

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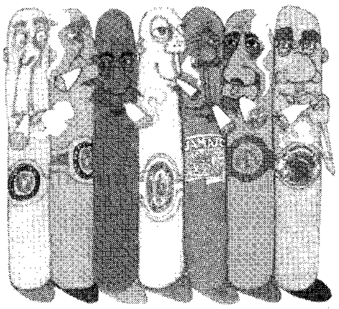

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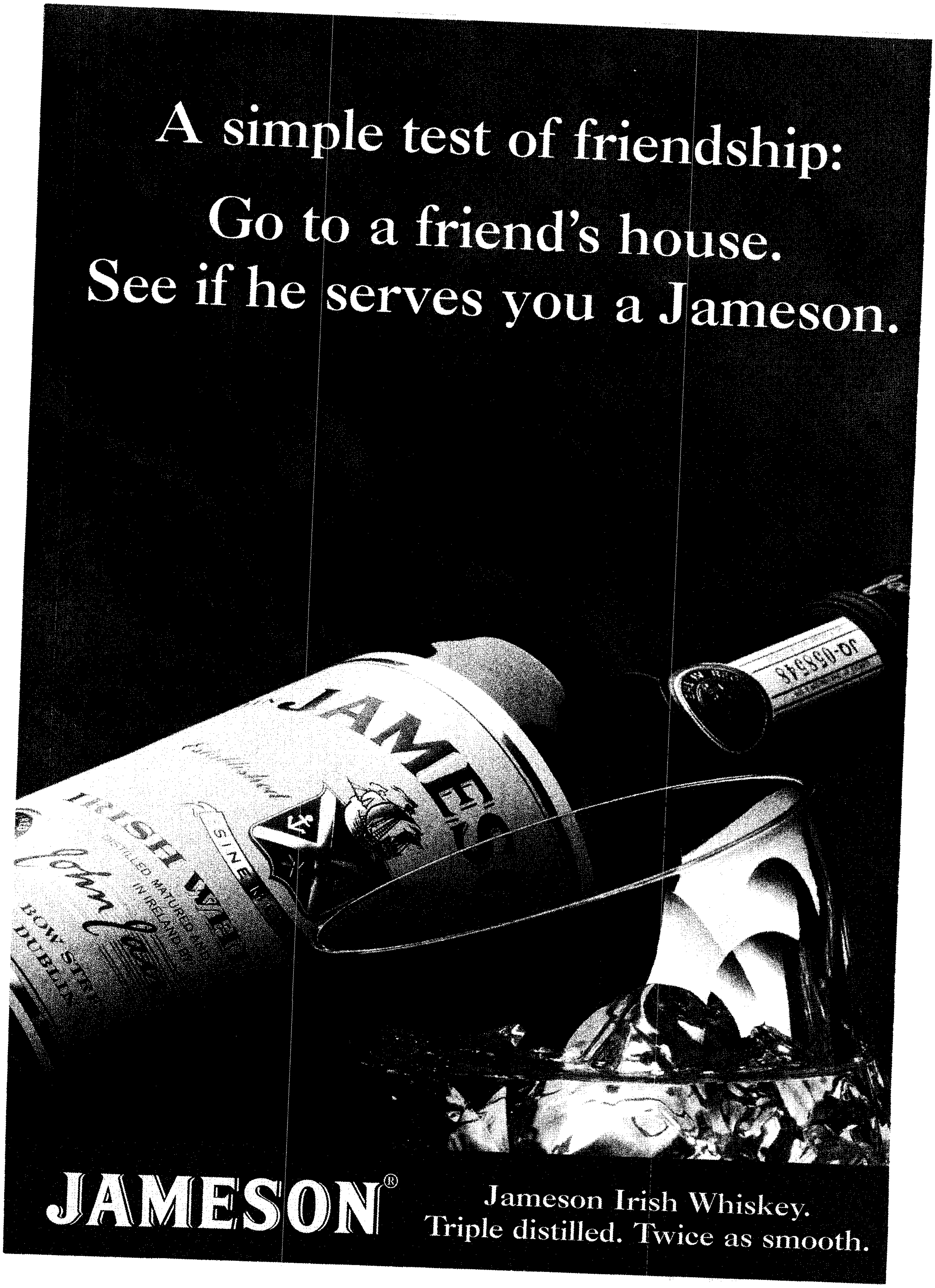
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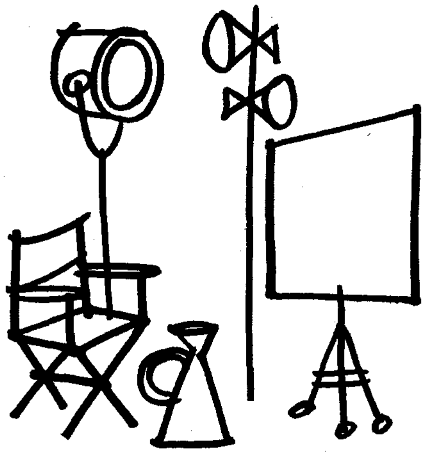


FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

Citizen Ruth—Laura Dern stars as a pregnant woman being pursued by zealots on both sides of the abortion debate, in a comedy co-written (with Jim Taylor) and directed by Alexander Payne. Opening Dec. 13. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Jerry Maguire—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Dec. 13. (Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.)

Mars Attacks!—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Dec. 13. (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

Orson Welles: The One-Man Band—A documentary about the director's final years, compiled by Vassili Silovic from Welles's private archive of project ideas, sketches, and unfinished films. Opening Dec. 11. (Film Forum.)

The Preacher's Wife—Penny Marshall's remake of the 1947 comedy "The Bishop's Wife," with Whitney Houston in the title role, Courtney B. Vance as her husband, and Denzel Washington as the angel Dudley. Opening Dec. 13. (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, 84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 1, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 42.)

Bitter Sugar—A passively loyal young Cuban Communist (René Lavan) falls in love with a disaffected dancer (Mayté Vilán), and his faith in the Revolution topples like a bowling pin. The director, Leon Ichaso, tries hard to be contemporary (the lovers worry less about ideology than about getting kicked out of tourist-only hotels), but at this late date criticizing Castro's Cuba feels like shooting fish in a barrel. The pair does have chemistry, though, and Lavan is a discovery. In Spanish.—S.K. (Carnegie Hall Cinemas and Cinema 3rd Avenue.)

Breaking the Waves—The Danish director Lars von Trier tells the sad story of a devout young Scottish woman (Emily Watson) who becomes a whore in order to save the life of her critically ill husband (Stellan Skarsgård). Von Trier gives the highbrow audience precisely what it wanted in the art-house boom years of the fifties and early sixties—nudity plus theology. The erotic-metaphysical hokum would be somewhat easier to take if the picture displayed anything resembling a genuine religious impulse.—T.R. (11/18/96) (Angelika Film Center.)

The Crucible—Arthur Miller has always maintained that his 1953 play about the Salem witchcraft trials was a cry of protest against the anti-Communist zealotry of the McCarthy era. The parallel between the actual witch-hunts of the seventeenth century and the metaphorical witch-hunts of the nineteen-fifties never seemed very strong, and in Nicholas Hytner's film version (which has a script by the playwright himself) it looks flimsier than ever. Hytner's florid, hyperbolic direction does, however, reveal the play as a characteristic product of its time—not so much in its social attitudes as in its sexual politics. The themes that come through most clearly here are fear of women and hatred of youth: the teen-age girls of Salem squeal and writhe, and the hero, John Proctor (Daniel Day-Lewis)—the manliest man in the colonies—swings from the gallows. The movie plays less like a stinging political manifesto than like one of those earnest exposé-style fifties movies in which gangs of hormone-crazed "juvenile delinquents" ran riot and terrorized the respectable folk. Also with Winona Ryder, Paul Scofield, Joan Allen, and Bruce Davison.—T.R. (12/2/96) (Lincoln Square.)

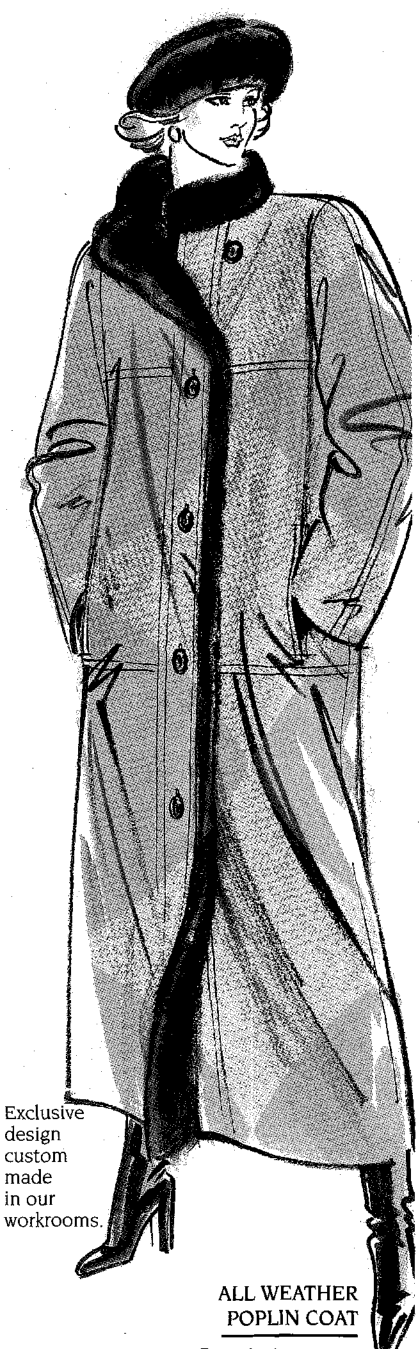
Daylight—After an explosion seals a tunnel between Manhattan and New Jersey, Sylvester Stallone comes to the aid of the trapped victims, in a thriller directed by Rob Cohen. (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, National Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and 34th Street Showplace.)

The English Patient—Written and directed by Anthony Minghella, from the novel by Michael Ondaatje, this long and searching movie tangles together a number of stories and characters: Almásy (Ralph Fiennes) and Katherine (Kristin Scott Thomas), who have an affair in North Africa before the Second World War; a French-Canadian nurse (Juliette Binoche) who cares for the badly burned Almásy after the war, and the Sikh soldier (Naveen Andrews) *she* has an affair with; and the mysterious Caravaggio (Willem Dafoe), a scavenging thief who appears to know the secrets of Almásy's past. The triumph of the film lies not just in the force and range of the performances but in Minghella's creation of an intimate epic: vast landscapes mingle with the minute details of desire, and the combination is transfixing.—A.L. (11/25/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, and Village East Cinemas.)

Everyone Says I Love You—A musical written and directed by Woody Allen, set in Paris, Venice, and New York. (Lincoln Square; through Dec. 12.)

101 Dalmatians—The remake from hell. In 1961 Disney made a perfectly respectable and surprisingly mush-free animated version of Dodie Smith's novel. In the new live-action version, directed by Stephen Herek, the dogs no longer talk but merely cock their heads and bark, reminding us that Dalmatians are not exactly the brightest of their species; and the humans, led by Jeff Daniels and Joely Richardson, go through the whole affair with a sort of dazed, disbelieving look, as well they might. In her initial scenes as Cruella DeVil, Glenn Close displays a certain scarlet relish for her own monstrosity; but soon the film betrays her, too, reducing her to the level of undignified stooge and landing her in a variety of noxious substances. By the end, the charm and delicacy of the original cartoon have long been replaced by laborious gross-outs. Is this now official Disney policy?—A.L. (12/9/96) (86th Street East Twin, Gotham Cinema, Guild, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas.)

Jingle All the Way—Even by the standard of Hollywood's traditional Christmas cynicism, Brian Levant's unfunny comedy aims remarkably low, and it still doesn't hit. This is the tale of an executive (Arnold Schwarzenegger) so overworked that he has forgotten to buy his son's Christmas present, a revolting purple doll named Turbo Man. So he spends Christmas Eve in the company of other frustrated parents—notably a post-office worker played by Sinbad—scouring the land for Turbo Men. A few of Sinbad's early lines suggest that the picture will hold such commercial mania up to mockery, but Randy Kornfield's script and Levant's flailing direction quickly yield to the same frenzy that envelops the hero. Why is it that Schwar-



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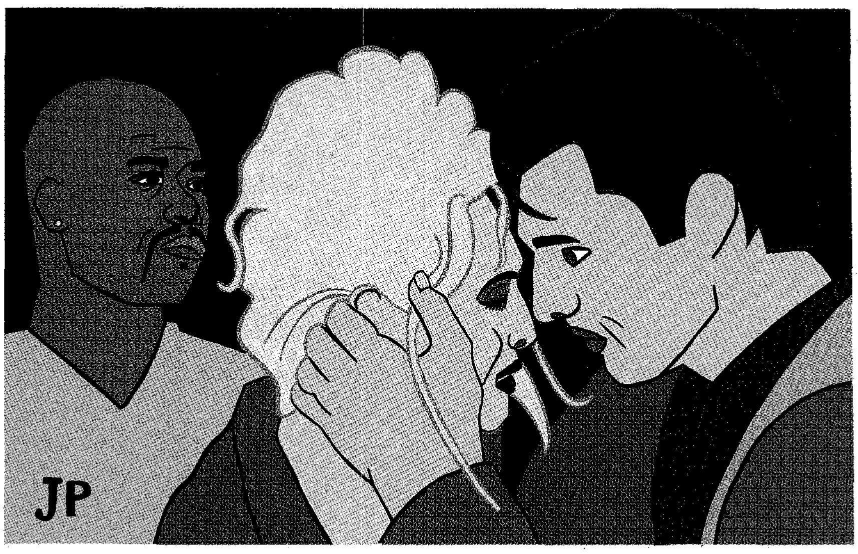
zenegger's attempts at comedy are even scarier than his sci-fi thrillers?—A.L. (Baronet, Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Olympia, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th St. East, and Waverly.)

Looking for Richard—Al Pacino, a self-confessed Shakespeare addict, has come up with a witty, two-tone movie about his obsession. Some of it is documentary—a number of loose, light riffs on the subject of "Richard III"—and some of it is excerpts from the tragedy itself, with performances of surprising intensity from such stars as Alec Baldwin and Winona Ryder; Pacino is the haunted and unshaven king. The film, which is at once diverting and deeply concentrated, ends up, of course, telling us as much about Pacino as about Shakespeare.—A.L. (Reviewed 11/25/96 under Onward and Upward with the Arts.) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Waverly.)



Opening Dec. 13, Cuba Gooding, Jr., Renee Zellweger, and Tom Cruise in "Jerry Maguire."

JP FORREST

Losing Chase—Kevin Bacon's study of a woman (Helen Mirren) dealing with the aftermath of her mental breakdown and with its effect on her son (Michael Yarmush), her husband (Beau Bridges), and their nanny (Kyra Sedgwick). (Orpheum VII and Quad Cinema.)

Michael Collins—The short life and lasting legend of the Irish freedom fighter Michael Collins (1890-1922), compressed into a vigorous movie by the writer and director Neil Jordan. Liam Neeson gives a hefty performance as the hero, but the film takes too much care insuring that we like and admire him, cooling the figure's hot temper and ignoring any sins of the flesh (let alone of the spirit) which he committed—he remains devoted to Kitty Kiernan (Julia Roberts). The strength of the movie resides mainly in the work of its cameraman, Chris Menges, who delivers a barrage of images as rousing and changeable as the fortunes of Collins himself.—A.L. (10/14/96) (Beekman and Village East Cinemas.)

Microcosmos—A revelatory documentary about insects. The directors, Claude Nuridsany and Marie Pérennou, who were trained as biologists, spent years designing cameras that would capture spiders, butterflies, beetles, and bees in their habitats as never before. There are no voice-overs, just closeups of bugs; a few sequences surpass the most horrific science fiction, but a surprising number of the creatures are quite cute. The inventive, funny-ethereal score is by Bruno Coulais.—S.K. (Film Forum 3.)

The Mirror Has Two Faces—This bizarre romantic comedy, produced and directed by and starring Barbra Streisand, is an uncomfortable ugly-duckling story about a plain-Jane Columbia professor who has an epiphany, develops self-confidence, gets in shape, dyes her hair, and becomes a glamorous nineties siren. The affable Jeff Bridges (as a handsome colleague Streisand falls in love with), Lauren Bacall (in a snapping-turtle performance as her frosty mom), and Mimi Rogers (as her prettier, uptight sister), all generate real charm. So does Streisand—until her diva makeover. The movie's slide into a my-mother-never-told-me-I'm-beautiful gripe session is fascinating to watch; it's also embarrassingly trite.—B.D. (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, Village Theatre VII, and Ziegfeld.)

Ransom—Ron Howard's grinding picture could have been a snappy little hostage thriller but decided, somewhere along the way, to take itself terribly seriously. Mel Gibson plays the wealthy owner of an airline, whose young son (Brawley Nolte) is kidnapped by a gang of good-for-nothings. Rene Russo suffers from a woefully underpowered role as Tom's wife, Gary Sinise struggles to convince us that he has the makings of a scuzzy villain, and Gibson himself has to stand there and act tragic in closeup.—A.L. (11/11/96) (84th Street Sixplex, 86th Street East Twin, Embassy 2, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas. . . . ¶ Embassy 1; through Dec. 12.)

Ridicule—The peasants on the swampy, disease-ridden estate of a country-bumpkin aristocrat (Charles Berling) are dying off, so he goes to Versailles to beg Louis XVI for permission to drain his land. But in order to get an audience with the king he must paint a beauty spot on his cheek, learn to dance, and outdo rival nobles in cruel contests of wit. Until the halfway point, Patrice Leconte's flawed but ingenious exploration of the quest for insider power depicts it as shabby, merciless, and burnout-inducing; then Remi Waterhouse's screenplay buries the comedy's strong premise under a simplistic, ahistorical gloss that makes it feel like an intellectual "Rocky." With Fanny Ardant as a worldly countess, and the beautiful, wooden Judith Godreche as a righteous scientist—a token of the Enlightenment. In French.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 68th St. Playhouse.)

Secrets & Lies—Hortense (Marianne Jean-Baptiste), the heroine of Mike Leigh's broadest and most ambitious film to date, decides after the death of her adoptive mother to seek her biological one. The quest turns up Cynthia (Brenda Blethyn), who freaks out: Hortense is middle-class and black, Cynthia working-class and white. Jean-Baptiste gives a quiet, pacific performance; Blethyn deals in spasms of exaggeration which belong in another film altogether. Still, there is a fine supporting cast, and they all gather in the final scene, a cathartic barbecue that starts off as nicely choreographed light comedy and darkens to a Bergman-like chorus of wailing women and slightly overcooked dialogue.—A.L. (Eastside Playhouse, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and The Screening Room.)

Set It Off—Jada Pinkett, playing a protective big sister trying to pay for her brother's college education, and Queen Latifah, as a brave, blustering pothead lesbian, lead a foursome of young black women driven by poverty, police brutality, and the general callousness of men and of white people into robbing banks. Vivica A. Fox and Kimberly Elise round out the quartet, and the actresses are all strong in quirky, individual ways. This is a dumb heist movie that nevertheless gets real mileage from the plight of its tough but naïve protagonists. Directed by F. Gary Gray.—S.K. (Criterion Center, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

Shine—The hero of Scott Hicks's speedy, absorbing biographical film is the Australian concert pianist David Helfgott (played, at different stages of his life, by Alex Rafalowicz, Noah Taylor, and Geoffrey Rush), who suffered a severe breakdown, spent years in mental institutions, and then, improbably, resumed his career. It's an artist-in-torment story with a happy ending. Helfgott's experience as the movie relates it represents not only the usual triumph over adversity but also a nearly magical reversal of his relationship to his art: before his collapse, music is his curse; afterward, it's his salvation. Hicks and his screenwriter, Jan Sardi, sacrifice process (the process of musical development and of recovery from mental illness) for pace, and, although the movie's swiftness and lightness are pleasing in themselves, the over-all image they create is indistinct: it just evaporates in your head when the lights come up. Also with Armin Mueller-Stahl, Lynn Redgrave, and John Gielgud (who's in especially buoyant comic form).—T.R. (12/2/96) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square. . . . ¶ Cinema I; through Dec. 12.)

Sleepers—Barry Levinson's movie is a doggedly faithful adaptation of Lorenzo Carcaterra's 1995 best-seller, which purported to be a memoir of the author's youth in Hell's Kitchen, his horrifying experiences in an upstate reformatory, and his participation, years later, in an elaborate scheme to avenge the abuses that he and his friends suffered at the hands of the reform school's sadistic guards. The book quickly aroused suspicion that it was a hoax, and the film does nothing to dispel the aura of fishiness: it plays as a thoroughly old-fashioned Hollywood crime melodrama. With Jason Patric, Brad Pitt, Robert De Niro, Kevin Bacon, Minnie Driver, Vittorio Gassman, Frank Medrano, and Dustin Hoffman.—T.R. (11/4/96) (Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

Sling Blade—Billy Bob Thornton has the lead in a drama he wrote and directed, about a mildly retarded man with a criminal past living in a small town in the South. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Space Jam—Produced by Ivan Reitman and more assembled than directed by Joe Pytka, this big-budget attempt at a merchandising bonanza doesn't begin to approach the artistry of "Who Framed Roger Rabbit": the cartoon characters never seem fully integrated into the live action—they just hang there. The story, in which Michael Jordan, the basketball superstar, saves Bugs Bunny and friends from aliens who want them for their Disney-like amusement park, sacrifices the anarchic spirit of Chuck Jones, who animated the Warner Bros. classics of the forties and fifties, to the current Warners marketing team in ways so obvious that they make Disney look humble.—B.D. (Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

Star Trek: First Contact—In the eighth installment of the "Star Trek" series, the trusty Enterprise, headed by that existentialist philosopher manqué Jean-Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart), is engaged in mortal conflict with the Borg, a race of merciless world-destroyers who have travelled to Earth in the year 2063 to stop the human race from making first contact with other beings. Picard and his deeply uninteresting crew are called upon to thwart this mischief; the only things that stand in

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FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL TOLL-FREE 1-888-97-JIMMY OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT *www.gmc.com/jimmy* their way are the dimness of the film (which leaves you indifferent to the fate of the characters, let alone that of the solar system) and the purring villainy of the top Borg, played by Alice Krige as if she wanted to prove that time-warping is good for your sex life—for a few minutes, she makes this tired movie writhe. The director, Jonathan Frakes, also stars as one of Picard's officers. With James Cromwell and Alfre Woodward as a pair of earthlings.—A.L. (12/9/96) (Astor Plaza, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Metro Cinema, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

The Substance of Fire—Daniel Sullivan directs Ron Rifkin, Timothy Hutton, Sarah Jessica Parker, and Tony Goldwyn in Jon Robin Baitz's adaptation of his 1991 drama, about a hardheaded publisher and his three children. (Carnegie Hall Cinemas; through Dec. 12.)

Swingers—A funny, boys-on-the-town ode to friendship and cruising for girls. The writer, Jon Favreau, co-stars with Vince Vaughn, a handsome new actor, and they're hilarious—but the film isn't a bubbleheaded comedy. The director, Doug Liman, follows his characters through swinging-singles hangouts from Hollywood to Vegas with a neon-soaked camera; beneath all the hip talk and the funny predicaments, his two heroes are wistful, stargazing romantics.—B.D. (Angelika Film Center, Cinema II, 62nd & Broadway, and State.)

William Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet—Whether the film really belongs to Shakespeare is open to question: his words are there, if you can hear them above the screech of the soundtrack, but the tone is set entirely by the Australian director Baz Luhrmann ("Strictly Ballroom"), who has updated the setting to a lurid Latino city bristling with drug wars and police helicopters. Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes give it their all as the star-crossed lovers, but, like the rest of the cast, they tend to shout or hurry their lines when everything gets to be too much; by the end, any hint of tragedy has disappeared in the kitsch.—A.L. (Reviewed 11/25/96 under Onward and Upward with the Arts.) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Manhattan Twin, Orpheum VII, and State.)

ALSO PLAYING

BEAUTIFUL THING: Quad Cinema. . . . **BIG NIGHT** (reviewed in our issue of 9/23/96): Cinema 3, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **BOUND:** Manhattan Twin. . . . **THE CHAMBER:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **FARGO** (3/25/96): 59th Street East Cinema. . . . **FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN:** Quad Cinema. . . . **THE FUNERAL:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **THE GARDEN OF THE FINZI-CONTINIS:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **THE GLIMMER MAN:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **HIGH SCHOOL HIGH** (11/11/96): Embassy 3. . . . **INDEPENDENCE DAY** (7/15/96): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **LAST MAN STANDING** (9/23/96): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **LOVESICK ON NANA STREET:** Angelika 57. . . . **MOTHER NIGHT** (11/4/96): Cinema 3rd Avenue. . . . **THE PROPRIETOR:** Carnegie Hall Cinemas. . . . **A SINGLE GIRL:** Quad Cinema. . . . **SURVIVING PICASSO:** Paris. . . . **THAT THING YOU DO!** (10/7/96): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **TWELFTH NIGHT:** Regency. . . . **2 DAYS IN THE VALLEY:** Worldwide Cinemas.

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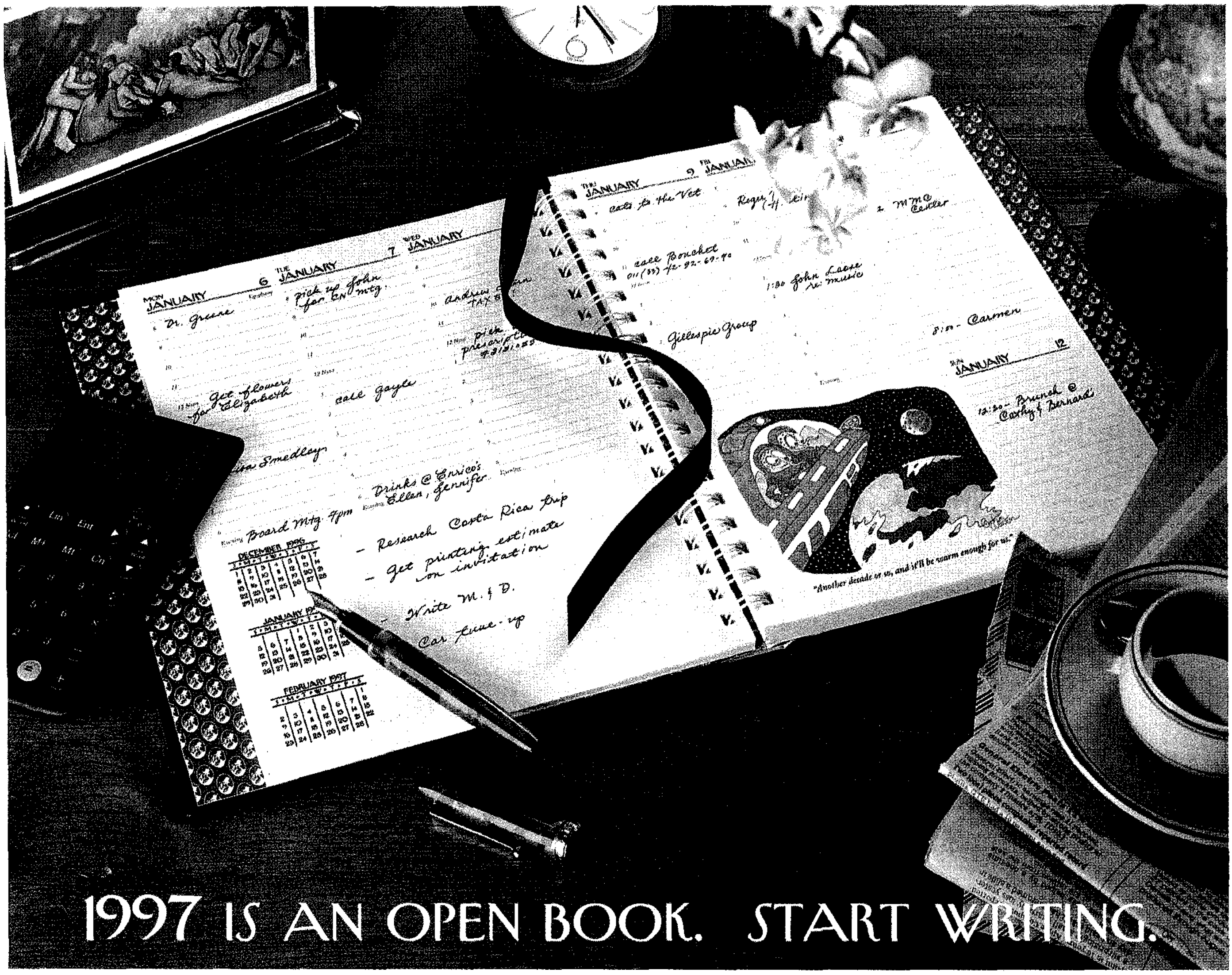
THEATRE ADDRESSES

(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th St.
Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Baronet, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Coronet, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy 1, Broadway at 46th St.
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Manhattan Twin, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
National Twin, Broadway at 44th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St.
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
68th St. Playhouse, Third Ave. at 68th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.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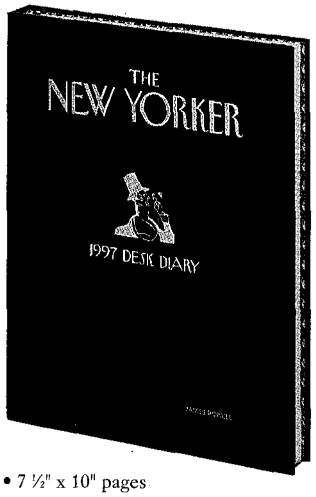

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REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Terrence Rafferty. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

L'Amour Fou (1968)—During the first half hour, there's a strong temptation to flee from this legendary Jacques Rivette film, which moves back and forth between the rehearsals for an experimental production of Racine's "Andromaque" and the disintegrating marriage of the actor-director (Jean-Pierre Kalfon) and his actress wife (Bulle Ogier). But those who stick with the film may find that Rivette's measured, unemphatic style begins to take hold. Tight little Bulle Ogier is ominously compelling; she gives a superlative performance. And there has never been anything like the *folie-à-deux* sex-and-destruction orgy that climaxes the marriage. (Four hours and twelve minutes.) In French.—P.K. (Anthology Film Archives; Dec. 13-15.)

The Boys of St. Vincent (1994)—From the outside, St. Vincent—an orphanage run by a Roman Catholic religious order, in St. John's, Newfoundland—is Boys Town; on the inside, it's a Dickensian hell, in which trapped boys burn for their elders' sins. The head Brother, Peter Lavin (Henry Czerny), is a monster, constantly forcing his sexual attentions on ten-year-old Kevin Reevey (Johnny Morina), and he's not the only abuser on the staff. John N. Smith's movie—a two-part film, made for Canadian television—is muckraking social drama that transforms itself, in the course of its three hours, into something far more disturbing than a straightforward exposé: it ends up as a startlingly detailed picture of spiritual chaos.—T.R. (Anthology Film Archives; Dec. 12.)

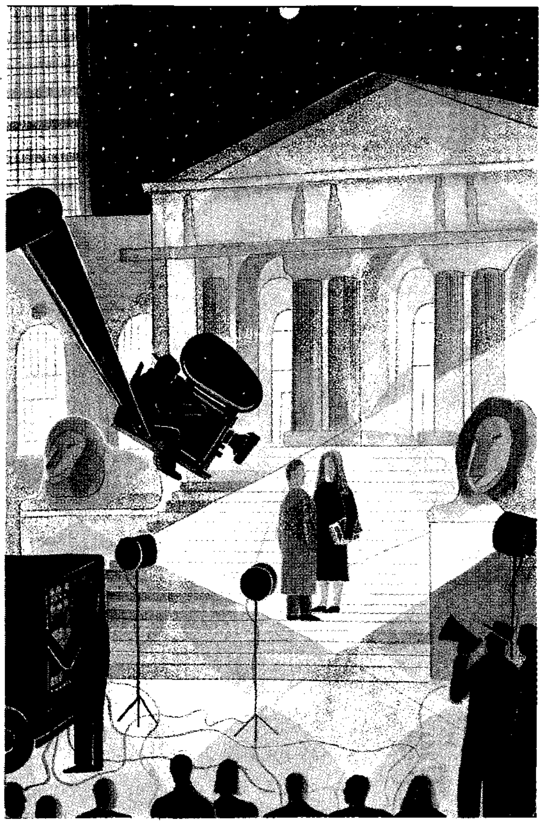
East of Eden (1955)—An amazingly high-strung, feverishly poetic movie about Cain and Abel as American brothers living on a lettuce farm in California in the years just before the First World War. Elia Kazan directed this adaptation of Steinbeck's novel, and it's like seeing a series of teasers: violent moments and charged scenes without much coherence. As the romantic, alienated young hero, James Dean is decorated with all sorts of charming gaucheries; he's sensitive, defenseless, hurting. Maybe his father (Raymond Massey) doesn't love him, but the camera does, and we're supposed to; we're thrust into upsetting angles, caught in infatuated closeups, and prodded—"Look at all that beautiful desperation." It's far from a dull movie, but it's certainly a very strange one; here and in "Rebel Without a Cause," Dean seems to go just about as far as anybody can in acting misunderstood. With Julie Harris, who gives a memorably lyric performance, Burl Ives, and Jo Van Fleet.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Dec. 15-17.)

Minnie and Moskowitz (1971)—John Cassavetes built this movie on a small conceit—a love affair between two people who are wildly unsuited to each other—and it doesn't work. The picture drivels on about the joys of spontaneity, while Gena Rowlands and Seymour Cassel remain embarrassingly wrong for each other.—P.K. (Anthology Film Archives; Dec. 11.)

The Seven Samurai (1954)—Seven hired knights defend a village against forty mounted bandits—their pay a few handfuls of rice. This three-and-a-half-hour epic on violence and action—Akira Kurosawa's masterpiece—has been widely imitated, but no one has come near it. With Toshiro Mifune and Takashi Shimura. In Japanese.—P.K. (Cinema Village; starting Dec. 13.)

Splendor in the Grass (1961)—William Inge wrote the baroque primer-Freud screenplay about the frustrations of adolescent sexuality, set in a small town in Kansas in the twenties, and Elia Kazan whipped it up. The picture is hysterically on the side of young love, and this hysteria seems integral to the film's moments of emotional power, its humor, and its beauty. Natalie Wood and Warren Beatty are high-school sweethearts whose parents think they are too young to marry. And so, deprived of love together, the boy turns to a floozy and the girl, maddened by loss of him, goes to a mental institution. The parents are the mean, hypocritical monsters you expect in this sort of youth-slanted picture that pretends to deal with real adolescent problems but actually begs the issue by having the two kids tenderly in love; the movie doesn't suggest that adolescents have a right to sexual experimentation—it just attacks the corrupted grownups for their failure to value love above all else. The extraordinary cast includes Sandy Dennis, Barbara Loden, Phyllis Diller, and Inge himself as the reverend.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Dec. 12-14.)

A Woman Under the Influence (1974)—The writer-director, John Cassavetes, presents his morose yet romantic view of mental disorder, with Gena Rowlands as the helpless victim of a bullying blue-collar husband (Peter Falk) and a repressive society. The scenes are often unshaped, and so rudderless that the meanings don't emerge. Rowlands externalizes schizophrenic dissolution; she fragments before our eyes. But her prodigious performance is enough for half a dozen tours de force—it's exhausting. With Katherine Cassavetes.—P.K. (Anthology Film Archives; Dec. 12 and Dec. 14.)



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LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Films directed by Elia Kazan. Dec. 11: "Panic in the Streets" (1950) and "Man on a Tightrope" (1953). . . . Dec. 12-14: "Splendor in the Grass" (†) and "Wild River" (1960). . . . Dec. 15-17: "East of Eden" (†).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Dec. 12 at 2:30: "Hello, Sister!" (1933, Alfred Werker). . . . ¶ Dec. 12 at 3:30 and 6: "That Old Gang of Mine" (1996), directed by Carlos de Jesus, who will be present. . . . ¶ Dec. 13 at 2:30: "Greed" (1925, Erich von Stroheim; silent). . . . ¶ Recent films from Germany. Dec. 13 at 3, Dec. 15 at 2:30, and Dec. 16 at 3: "Journey Into Life" (Thomas Mitscherlich; in German and other languages). . . . Dec. 13 at 6 and Dec. 14 at 2:30: "Workaholic" (Sharon von Wietersheim; in German). . . . Dec. 13 at 8 and Dec. 15 at 5: "Sexy Sadie" (Matthias Glasner; in German). . . . Dec. 14 at 5: "Warshots" (Heiner Stadler; in German and Arabic). . . . ¶ A program of recent films from the former Soviet republics. Dec. 13 at 6: "The Muslim" (Vladimir Khotinenko; in Russian). . . . Dec. 13 at 8:15 and Dec. 15 at 5: "A Play for a Passenger" (Vadim Abrashitov; in Russian). . . . Dec. 14 at 2: "The Particulars of the National Hunt" (Alexandr Rogozkin; in Russian). . . . Dec. 14 at 5 and Dec. 17 at 2:30: "The Nest" (Aivars Freimanis; in Latvian). . . . Dec. 15 at 2: "The Soul Is Burnt Out" (Bayram Abdullaev; in Turkmen). . . . Dec. 16 at 2:30: "Year of the Dog" (Semyon Aranovitz; in Russian). . . . Dec. 16 at 6: "Quiet Pages" (Alexandr Sokurov; in Russian). . . . Dec. 17 at 6: "Drumroll" (Sergei Ovcharov; music and sound effects, no dialogue). . . . ¶ Dec. 16 at 6:30: "Deseret" (1995), directed by James Benning, who will be present. . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 3 and 6: "Merry Christmas Baby! A Holiday Ditty from New York" (1995, Gary Keys).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Recent films from Spain; all in Spanish, with English subtitles. Dec. 11 at 2 and Dec. 12 at 4 and 8:15: "Among the Reds" (Azucena Rodríguez). . . . Dec. 11 at 4 and Dec. 12 at 2 and 6:15: "An Internal Affair" (Carlos Balagué). . . . Dec. 13 at 2 and 6:30, Dec. 14 at 4, and Dec. 15 at 6: "Libertarians" (Vicente Aranda). . . . Dec. 13 at 4:30 and 9 and Dec. 14 at 8:30: "Adosados" (Mario Camus). . . . Dec. 14 at 6:30 and Dec. 15 at 4 and 8:30: "Day of the Beast" (Alex de la Iglesia). . . . Dec. 16 at 2 and 6:30: "Bwana" (Imanol Uribe). . . . Dec. 16 at 4 and 8:30: "Thesis" (Alejandro Amenábar). . . . ¶ Weekend showings for children. Dec. 14-15 at 2: "Gamera, the Guardian of the Universe" (1995, Shusuke Kaneko).

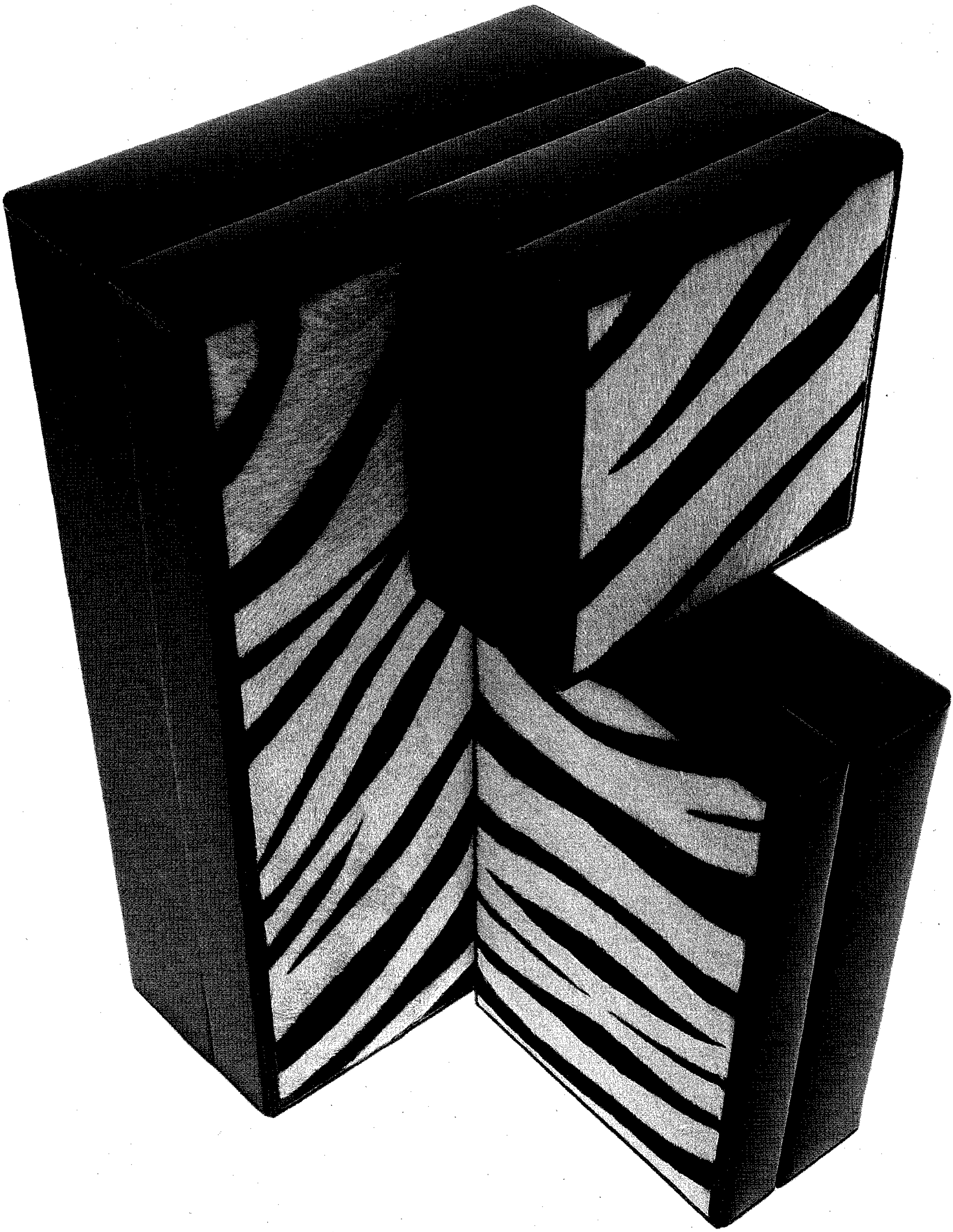
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Dec. 17 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "French Twist" (1995, Josiane Balasko; in French).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Dec. 14 at 2 and 4 and Dec. 15 at 2 and 4:30: Four different programs of short animated films by Max and Dave Fleischer.

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Dec. 15 at 7, the feature will be "Female Trouble" (1974, John Waters), with Divine.

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363)—From Dec. 13: "The Seven Samurai" (†).

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—A program of films by Jacques Rivette; in French, with English subtitles. Dec. 11-12 at 6:30: "Jeanne la Pucelle: Part Two, Les Prisons" (1993). . . . Dec. 13-15 at 8: "L'Amour Fou" (†). . . . ¶ Dec. 11 at 7: "Raise the Red Lantern" (1992, Zhang Yimou; in Chinese). . . . ¶ Dec. 11 at 9: "The Scent of Green Papaya" (1994, Tran Anh Hung; in Vietnamese). . . . ¶ A program of films starring Gena Rowlands. Dec. 11 at 9:30: "Minnie and Moskowitz" (†). . . . Dec. 12 at 9:30 and Dec. 14 at 4:30: "A Woman Under the Influence" (†). . . . Dec. 13 at 6: "The Neon Bible" (1995, Terrence Davis). . . . Dec. 14 at 3: "Opening Night" (1977, John Cassavetes). . . . Dec. 15 at 3: "Faces" (1968, Cassavetes). . . . Dec. 15 at 5:30: "Gloria" (1980, Cassavetes). . . . ¶ Dec. 12 at 7: "The Boys of St. Vincent" (†). . . . ¶ A showing of Satyajit Ray's Apu trilogy. Dec. 16-17 at 6: "Pather Panchali" (1955). . . . Dec. 16-17 at 8: "Aparajito" (1956). . . . Dec. 16-17 at 10: "The World of Apu" (1959). . . . ¶ Dec. 17 at 7 and 9:30: "Landscape in the Mist" (1988, Theo Angelopoulos; in Greek).



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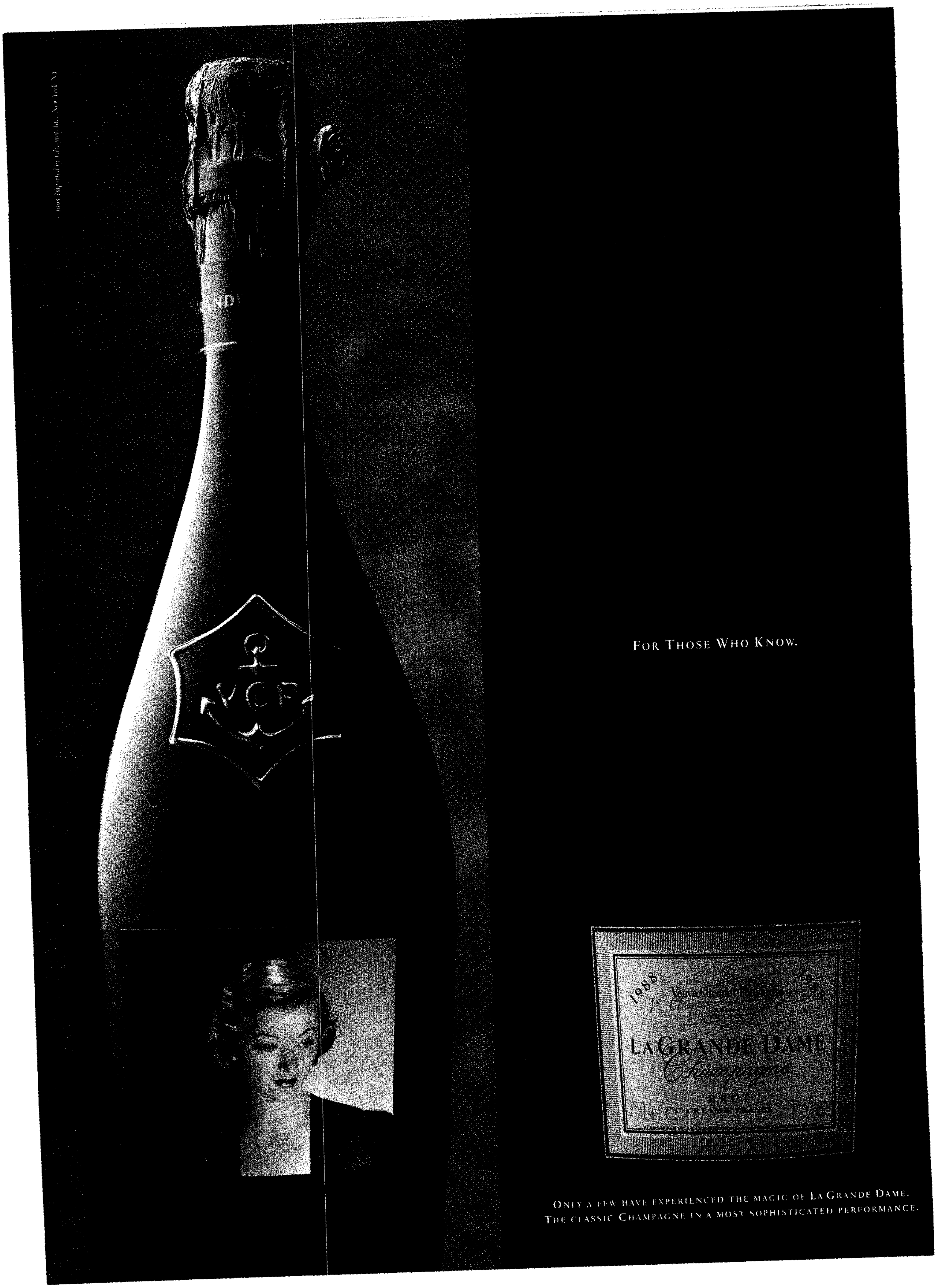
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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

THE SONG OF GRIDLOCK SAM

One morning last week, as buses inched up Madison Avenue through the Christmas crush and motorists negotiated a new impasse on the Gowanus Expressway, Gridlock Sam, felled by a cold, sat in his living room in Brooklyn. Gridlock Sam, who writes a popular daily column in the *News* on traffic, turned out to be a lanky fellow with a long, narrow face and a close-cropped beard. He is also Samuel Schwartz, a civil engineer who retired, in 1990, as the city's chief engineer. People are always asking him why New York appears to be grinding to a halt, especially around holiday time. "What happened," he said, "was that things began reaching the end of their useful life around 1970. The first highways and the first bridges had to be reconstructed. Then we were hit with the fiscal crisis. Maintenance came to an end. And very quickly a number of bridges had to be closed." Now, he pointed out, nearly every bridge linking Manhattan to the rest of the world is under repair, as are such key arterial routes as the Gowanus; the result has been, in various parts of the city, a permanent snarl.

"A bridge is like a machine," Schwartz explained between bouts with a Kleenex. "It's got loads of moving parts. There are things like bearing plates that allow parts of the bridge to slide back and forth, and there are rocker arms that enable the bridge to move in more than one dimension. And they all have to be lubricated, they have to be cleaned. Otherwise, they freeze"—which causes the concrete structure to crack. In 1900, he said, the city had two hundred people painting and lubricating and sweeping the Brooklyn Bridge; by the time he became chief bridge engineer, in the mid-eighties, there were three. "If you look at the Williamsburg Bridge"—which runs from the Lower East Side to Brooklyn—"it looks like an earthquake hit it," he said. "You can take your hand and go right through the concrete—the bridge has moved so much because they didn't lubricate the bearing plates. And that part of the bridge has to be demolished." Four of the Williamsburg's eight lanes have been closed for months, creating traffic pileups while absorbing hundreds of millions of dollars in construction costs. Schwartz said that it all could have been avoided with a steady application of nineteenth-century technology.

Schwartz is a lifelong New Yorker who, at forty-eight, is just old enough to feel nostalgic for a time when the city was a more navigable place. "I grew up riding the subways with a friend who is now an assistant commissioner of transportation," he recalled. "We used to stay on the train and ride it all day, and sometimes stay on and see where they went at night." Schwartz went to work for the Traffic Department as a junior engineer. In 1980, in the midst of the transit strike, he publicly used the word "gridlock" for the first time, thus coining one of the great modern neologisms. Schwartz also became the person reporters would call when they wanted to know how bad traffic would be the day before Thanksgiving. It was his brother's idea that he turn traffic forecasting into a living, and that he use the name Gridlock Sam. Schwartz also teaches civil engineering at Cooper Union, runs an engineering business, and is the author of "New York Shortcuts and Traffic Tips," an indispensable handbook for city motorists which offers advice on such matters as "Queue Jumping the Backup at the Bronx End of the Throgs Neck Bridge."

In his youth, Schwartz said, engineers dreamed of nothing finer than maintaining the great bridges of New York. Now the engineer has been superseded by the "bean counter," and we are suffering the consequences. He pointed out that although the salt the city uses to melt snow and ice has a corrosive effect on roadways, the city refuses to use a less harmful synthetic substitute because it's more expensive, despite the fact that the cost of repairing the corrosion is vastly greater. Just as retrograde, in his view, is the city and state's insistence on fixing roadways by pouring concrete at the site. Construc-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MICHAEL WITTE

tion crews have been working on the F.D.R. Drive on and off since a four-hundred-pound chunk of concrete fell and killed a man in 1989, creating a terrible bottleneck near Twenty-third Street. Schwartz maintained that officials could have solved the problem almost overnight if they had installed prefabricated decks, which can be "tucked" into the existing roadway. (Schwartz has a personal interest here, since he's representing the decks' manufacturer.) He deplored the practice by city crews of tearing up streets to repair cracked sewers, when technology has made it possible for them to reinforce the damaged water pipes with liners programmed to assume the appropriate thickness. So why don't they? Schwartz said that those same bean counters have systematically gutted the research-and-planning office of the public-works departments. (A call to city and state officials elicited explanations ranging from concerns about costs, doubts about the new technologies, and, in effect, "if it ain't broke don't fix it.")

Schwartz got up and walked out on his porch. In the midmorning quiet of Flatbush, on the tiny strip of front lawn bordering the street, was a tree that, even in December, was blazing orange and yellow. He had it put in six years ago, he said proudly. What kind of tree was it? "I don't know," the man with asphalt in his veins said. "It's a pretty tree."

LEAPIN' LIZARDS

Ben Wattenberg

When Robert Bork and Ben Wattenberg took their places onstage at the American Enterprise Institute's annual policy conference last week in Washington, the fog—which had settled in during two hours of discussion on "Regulating the Future: The New Industrial Policy"—lifted. The archconservative jurist and the neoconnish political analyst were there to debate a proposition—"That America's brightest days lie yet before her"—which has recently been dividing conservatives who believe that the country is getting better despite the baleful effects of sixties liberalism from those who believe that it is doomed because of sixties liberalism. The topic was rich with possibilities for high-minded debate, but the talk quickly took a turn into Siskel-and-Ebert territory.

Robert Bork

Bork, the goateed pessimist, moved briskly to the "nihilism" of modern life. "I need hardly describe the nature of popular entertainment or the stuff that's on the Internet," he began, displaying a circumspection seldom encountered in "Slouching Towards Gomorrah," his best-selling jeremiad about the decline of the West. Pulling his spectacles down from their perch atop his bald pate, Wattenberg, the owlish optimist, countered, "To be sure, there is a lot of crapola out there. But you know, most of the most popular movies in America are pretty good." He proceeded to offer his catalogue of uncrapola, which included "Forrest Gump," "Schindler's List," "Independence Day," "Braveheart," the spate of Jane Austen films (not forgetting "Clueless"), the spate of Shakespeare films, "Toy Story," and "The Lion King," as well as the country-music boom and the renaissance of jazz and blues.

This put the Judge on his mettle. After citing evidence of "cultural trash" in everything from cyberspace to the CD racks, he took off on the pernicious sociocultural dynamics of gangsta rap. "A lot of people," he said, "comfort themselves with the thought that this is confined to the black community, but that's not true—some of the worst rappers are white, like Nine Inch Nails." It was a brave reference to a band which, though white, does not rap.

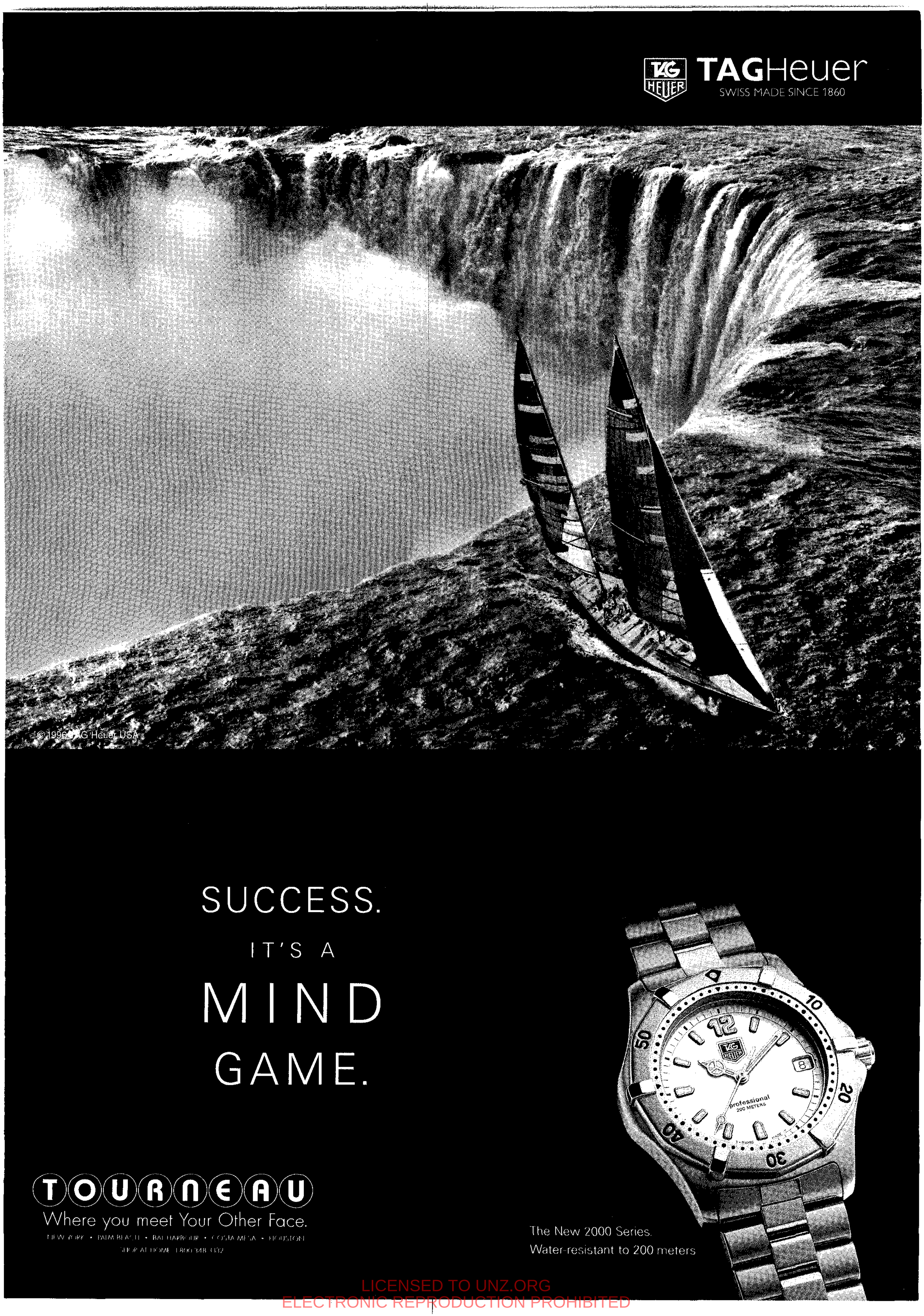
Not wanting, perhaps, to reveal too much familiarity with this particular aspect of the out-there stuff, Wattenberg muttered, "You can't understand the lyrics anyway." When he praised American popular culture for "feeding a prairie fire around the world," the audience started to murmur, and Bork theatrically rolled his eyes.

The debate closed on a lyrical note. Bork rhymed, "God's plan made a hopeful beginning / But man spoiled his chances by sinning / We trust that the story / Will end with God's glory / But at present the other side's winning." To which, Wattenberg chimed, "Gomorrah, Gomorrah, I love you, Gomorrah. You're always a day away."

VOICE OF AMERICA

Raspy is *very* hot right now. That's why all the voice-over actors at a voice-over-actor holiday party were either smoking or drinking or yelling their heads off: obviously, they were doing extremely important work on their rasps. The party, which was thrown by the International Creative Management talent agency, was held at the Museum of Modern Art last week, and it was smoky and jolly and noisy. In the old days, before raspy got big, smooth was very hot, and, consequently, voice-over-actor parties were probably pretty dull. Most of the voice-over actors at the I.C.M. party looked like friendly strangers, but if you closed your eyes while they talked you immediately recognized who they were. This was maybe the only party in history where blindfolds would have been more useful than name tags.

The voice of ABC News/Denorex was at the party, sitting next to Don Pardo, the voice of Don Pardo, and trying to be heard over the music. A woman he was talking to didn't recognize him until he said, "*This has been a presentation of ABC News.*" He sounded authoritative, credible, and important, which was exactly how his agent, who was standing nearby, had described him. ABC mentioned that he got his voice-over start back in the smooth era. "When I was young, my hero was Alexander Scourby," he said. "He was the voice of Band-Aids. My *God*, he was good. No one could say 'When a little boy hurts' the way Scourby could." He added, "Then



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raspy became very in. I'm lucky. I'm raspy. Until recently, I smoked six packs a day."

The voice of Western Auto / Resolve carpet cleaner came by to say hello to ABC. Western seemed to have a head cold. "Very dangerous, colds," he growled (textured, sexy). "When I go on a job, I have to blow my nose very surreptitiously." Cadillac Eldorado/Emmy Awards/ABC Sports was right behind Western. He pointed toward the door. "Hey, everyone, I have to run, sorry," he yelled (powerful). "I have to go do Monday Night Football."

Carlton the Doorman/Garfield the Cat was lounging at a table near the back of the room. "I'm actually Mr. Mellow," he bellowed (droll, deadpan). "I'm quiet. When I work I wear quiet clothes. Nothing noisy, nothing nylon. I like unusual voices. My hero is the fellow who did the monkey in 'Aladdin.' Now *that's* someone with an unusual gift." What's the difference between his Carlton voice and his Garfield voice? He said, "Well, one's a *drunk*. The other has *fur*."

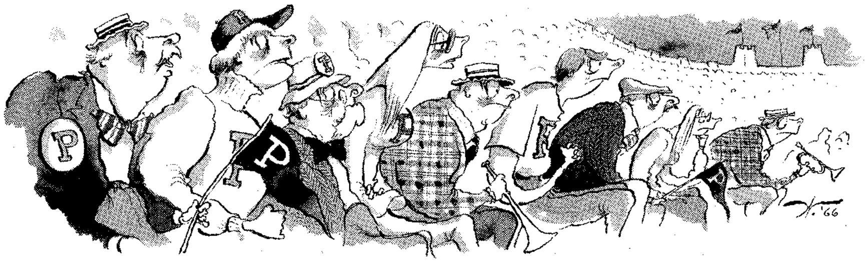
Someone brought Black & Decker Dustbuster over to yell hello. She was dressed in a nice black suit and sheer black hose. "You can wear whatever you want when you do voice work," she shouted (approachable, Demi Mooresque). During a momentary break in the music she said that she likes doing all the "Buster" ads—Dustbuster, Scumbuster—but that her favorite work was still her first commercial for Sara Lee Chocolate Chip Cheesecake. "Remember it?" she asked. She took a deep breath, fixed her gaze somewhere in middle space, and said, " '*Life is there . . . You just have to taste it*.' Isn't that great?"

For about two seconds in the middle of the party everyone stopped talking to hear the head of I.C.M.'s voice-overs department make a toast. Then they all started talking again. "I always talk," Motorola/Burger King roared (deep, jazzy, cool). "I love my voice. I'm *in love* with my voice." Next to him was Ford Explorer/Doritos, who yelled (*extremely* real), "I love hearing myself speak. I love it so much that I will keep speaking even if you are trying to talk, just as I am doing this moment. It's my voice! I love listening to it! I love it! I just love it!"

PARADISE LOST

A PRINCETON alum writes:

Palmer Stadium, in Princeton, the second-oldest stadium in the country, is going to be demolished over the winter to make way for a modern, more intimate venue. For years much of it has been trussed up in plastic to protect fans from getting brained by falling concrete. The game against Dartmouth at the end of November was the final athletic contest to be held there. It was an occasion for speeches, reminiscence, and muted mourning by many alumni, among them my father, who has been attending games in the stadium since he was a freshman, in 1935. I didn't go to many football games when I was at Princeton—all that siss-boom-bah business struck me as pretty ridiculous—and I probably wouldn't have gone to this one had it not been for my father. I had a feeling that the destruction of the old stadium was in some way connected with death in his mind.



On the way down the New Jersey Turnpike, my father talked about the "Snow Game" of 1935, when a drunken cook from a local diner somehow got into the Dartmouth defensive line, until the refs noticed and threw him out. "But not before Princeton ran two plays over him," Dad said proudly. I remembered coming to games with him as a little kid—the smell of the men's cigars, the tinny strains of the band, and the adults drinking in the warm eating clubs afterward.

Arriving in Princeton, we walked up the ramp to the stadium together and were greeted by a sudden, giddy shift of perspective as we entered the horseshoe-shaped stadium. I had the urge to go scrambling all over its polished-concrete tiers again, as I did as a kid. I remembered rushing onto the field with the other boys at the end of the game and trying to get the players to give us a chin strap or some other piece of gear. The players seemed strong and heroic, with their bloody, grass-stained forearms and their immense knee and shoulder pads. By the time I got to Princeton as a student, they didn't seem like heroes anymore.

Beginning with the kickoff, which Princeton fumbled and Dartmouth recovered, the Tigers proceeded to commit a series of appalling gaffes on the field. My father rooted loyally until the third quarter, when Dartmouth intercepted again. It seemed to take the heart out of him. The wives around us began making acerbic comments about the Tigers' ineptitude, while their husbands grew silent and sheepish.

Finally, a Princeton receiver dropped the ball for the last time, the game ended with Dartmouth winning, 24–0, and the only matter left to resolve was whether the undergraduates had enough gumption to tear down the goalposts. They did, and then marched to Lake Carnegie and threw them in, for good measure. My father and I took off our caps and sang "Old Nassau"—that vaguely absurd hymn to the great Tiger in the sky—facing the orange "P" as it was lowered from the stadium flagpole one last time. Then my father, saying that it had been a "cold, unhappy day," went into Jadwin Gym to get warm with his classmates while I walked out on the field.

In front of me, a man was kneeling on the field, neatly cutting out a square of sod with his penknife. He wrapped it tidily in a handkerchief and tucked it into his tweed jacket. ♦

"The Song of Gridlock Sam," James Traub; "Leapin' Lizards," John Heilemann; "Voice of America," Susan Orlean; "Paradise Lost," John Seabrook.

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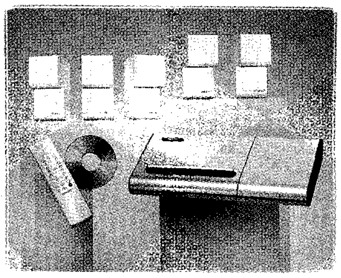

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LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

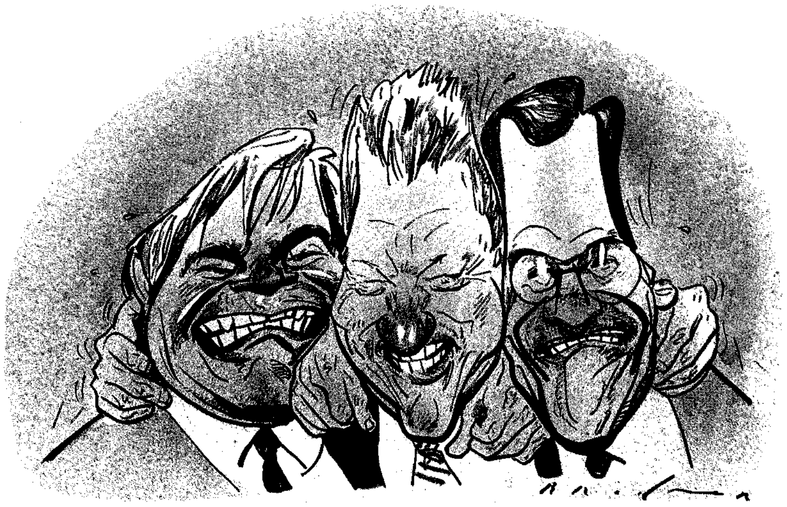
THE HUG

Bill Clinton is a genius at playing to an audience. It may even work with the Republicans.

BY JOE KLEIN

"THIS is the last speech of my last campaign," Bill Clinton mused on Election Eve as he came to the close of a fairly standard stump performance. It was just past midnight, and several thousand people who had gathered in the Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Arena quieted themselves in anticipation. The travelling press had been waiting for such a moment: the signal that an outbreak of campaign nostalgia was imminent, perhaps something messy, or something memorably eloquent—a summing up. This was not a man who hid his emotions from the public, especially at beginnings and endings. And Clinton did give nostalgia a try. He recalled his first, failed campaign for public office. He talked about his mother, and about others who had helped along the way. Then he concluded, "If you came up to me and said, 'What have you learned in twenty-three years that never changes?' I would say, 'When people . . . work together, America always wins.'" There were a great many words in the ellipses, but that was essentially it: Work together and win.

It seemed almost defiantly banal. There were cheers from the crowd, but not much emotion—not a damp eye in the house, or on the podium. Clinton had maintained a purposeful reserve throughout: he didn't indulge himself; he never lost control of his emotions. "He might have in 1992," an aide said later. "But he's the President now."



Gingrich, Clinton, and Lott: Containing those self-destructive urges.

STEVE BRODNER

Afterward, Clinton did cut loose a bit, climbing down to greet some of the crowd along the rope line and in the area near the stage, grabbing and touching, hugging all comers, including members of his staff. Then he wandered back onto the stage, out among Jerry Jeff Walker's band, shaking the musicians' hands and staring off into the emptying room. One of the musicians handed him a saxophone. The President considered it for a moment, then handed it back.

Clinton's last campaign appearance reflected the remarkable discipline—the will to blandness—that he had displayed all year. He no longer needed the immediate gratifications of a political rally; he was moving on to bigger things. In Sioux Falls, he spoke past the partisan crowd to his next audiences—to the newly neutered Republicans in Washington and, beyond them, to history—and he tried to do it within the restraints of inoffensiveness. He had made an extraordinary political comeback, but he couldn't afford to gloat. He certainly couldn't play the saxophone. Awkwardly and with a determined triteness, he offered what he thought the next audience would be looking for—the promise of reconciliation.

There is great and easy skepticism about all this, especially among the politico-blabocracy—the people who speculate about such things in newspapers and on television. And, though it is always possible that, with all the scandals, the Clintons will be run out of town on a rail, there is an almost startling level of optimism in Washington among the doers, as opposed to the talkers—short-term, perhaps, and draped in caveats, but optimism all the same. This represents a striking atmospheric change, perhaps the beginning of a new era.

BILL CLINTON has always been a creature of his audience. As he stumbled about the country in deep obscurity during the summer of 1991, I asked why it took a good ten minutes for him to get rolling when he gave a speech. "You know, you're right," he replied, enthusiastically and inimitably. "Why do you think that is?" A plausible answer revealed itself in due course: He needed the time to figure out who the audience was, and what it needed to hear. This may be *the* essential political skill, at once mystical and reprehensible; and Clinton is a master at it, subtly mixing themes and emotions from a palette of issues and attitudes, eternally customizing his spiel to fit the crowd. "He does do that," a senior Administration official said recently. "He relates intensely to the audience he's looking at, but he does it from a grounding in principle, which people sometimes miss."

There is a careful, predatory inevitability to Clinton's audience-hustling: a lion stalking a gazelle. The President's desire to please is so strong that he will, on occasion, offer a convincing account of a position he may abhor—"just to show that he sees the debate going on and understands all sides," the official said. Usually, though, he is subtler—the virtuoso of the selective assent, locking in on points of agreement so heartily that his audience doesn't notice the things that he has carefully chosen not to say. In private meetings, his great talent is the illusion of accessibility. But if he nods in apparent accord, it may mean only that he understands your point; if he's silent, or pensive, it's a good bet that he disagrees. When he is about the business of politics, the intensity of his interest is unvarying—especially during a campaign.

Often, the interaction between Clinton and his audience is so primal and immediate that it causes myopia, and he can't do what he managed to do in Sioux Falls—that is, see past the crowd. And so the period after a campaign ends—the transition—can be perilous. His stalking suddenly requires more precision: the specific "audience" for successful governance is smaller than the one for campaigning, and there is a danger that he will lose track of the public. Four years ago, as President-elect, Clinton seemed to do just that. He focussed on the congressional leaders of the Democratic Party, the constituency he appeared to need most if he wanted to "get things done" in Washington. Just days after the election, he invited the Democratic leaders to Little Rock for dinner—no Republicans were included—and began to empathize the hell out of them. "At one point, he asked me how often we met with Jimmy Carter when he was President," recalls Tom Foley, then the Speaker of the House, who hadn't been much of a Clinton fan during the campaign. "I told him, 'Every other Tuesday.' He expressed surprise, and said, 'We'll have to do better than that. I met with the leaders of the Arkansas legislature *every day*.' "

Soon afterward, Clinton went to Capitol Hill and met with the Democratic caucus, for the first time as President-elect. "He began to take questions and called on the first three or four congressmen by name: Dick, Steny, David . . . pretty well-known members," Foley recalls. "But I figured he wouldn't know everyone, and so I asked that each member give his or her name and district. Clinton looked up at me and said, 'Why? I'm doin' pretty well so far.' " And Clinton continued to do very well, on both substance and name recognition. "I think he'd probably memorized a picture of each member," Foley says, with a laugh. "Afterward, Barney Frank came up to me and said, 'We ought to put this guy on 'Jeopardy!' "

The President-elect apparently didn't bother to memorize the photographs of

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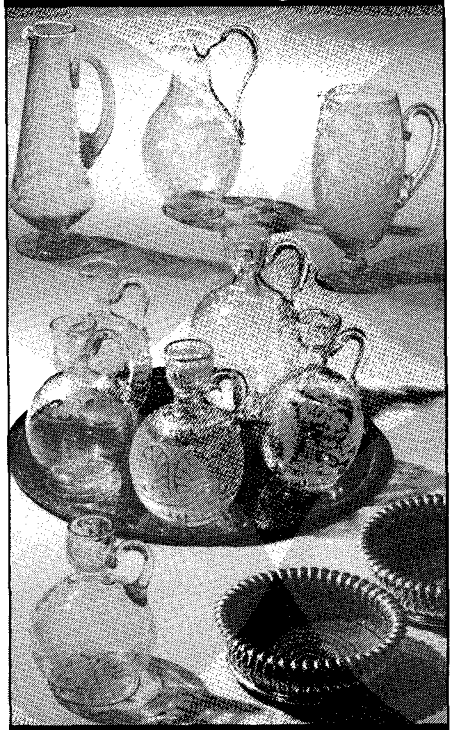

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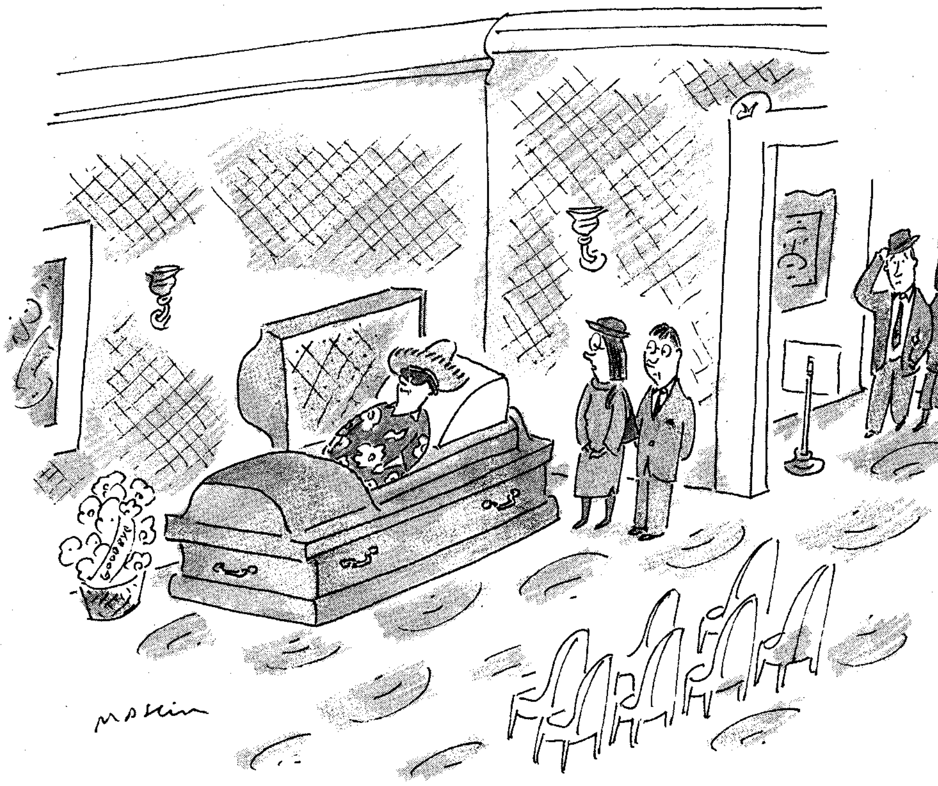

"Wherever he's going, I just hope they have frozen banana Daiquiris."

• •

any Republicans. He adopted the partisan intensity of his new audience, the congressional Democrats. It had been nurtured in a poisonous legislative atmosphere—particularly in the House of Representatives, where, in 1989, Newt Gingrich's successful campaign to get rid of the Democratic Speaker, Jim Wright, had initiated a period of vicious and extremely personal political warfare. The President's two most persuasive advisers on congressional matters, Leon Panetta and George Stephanopoulos, were products of that culture, and the intransigence of the Republicans toward every one of the President's early initiatives—particularly his 1993 budget plan—seemed to confirm their prejudices. In late 1993, the President and the First Lady initiated their hyperpartisan strategy on health-insurance reform. At a February, 1994, meeting in the White House, all but one of the various leaders and committee chairs involved in that gargantuan effort promised the President that they would jam the health-insurance bill through their respective arenas. The exception was Daniel Patrick Moynihan, then the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. Moynihan warned the President that health reform would need bipartisan support to succeed. "The ecology of the Senate is such that these sorts of things never pass by fifty-one to forty-nine," a Moynihan aide later recalled. "They pass by seventy to thirty, or not at all." (The bipartisan model was used successfully to pass the North American Free Trade Act, in the fall of 1993, but was then summarily abandoned.)

The Republicans, upon taking control of Congress in 1994, for the first time in forty years, proved to be even more intemperate than the Democrats had been two years earlier. They strutted about in triumph, appearing almost testosterone-addled. The new Speaker of the House then proceeded to make precisely the same mistake Clinton had made: he attempted to reform a major health-care program—in this case, Medicare—unilaterally, and was clobbered. Now Newt Gingrich, too, has found the new religion, and has been sounding vehemently palliative since the election.

The howling, tone-deaf partisanship of the nineteen-nineties was perhaps a natural consequence of the parties' respective lean years. But there was also a strange disconnect between the culture of Washington and the rest of the country. In Washington, contentiousness had become a major industry. The town was silly with special prosecutors: there was one investigating Gingrich's past, and four were tailing the Clinton Administration. Politicians, urged on by their consultants, reviled each other in ever more vacant, scurrilous campaigns. Meanwhile, the rest of the country was—by any reasonable historical standard—remarkably placid and prosperous, and came close to consensus on most major issues (which, given the absence of a significant foreign threat or domestic emergency, were relatively few). By 1996, politics had become for most people a seasonal inconvenience—sort of like hay fever. The public seemed perpetually appalled by the torrent of inconsequential vituperation.

"It was a twist on the old nuclear-war strategy," a Clinton aide said. "Both parties practiced Mutually Assured Self-Destruction. We launched and destroyed ourselves in '94. The Republicans did it in '95. And now what we have is a nuclear winter of . . ." The aide stopped, laughed, and thought twice about pressing the metaphor. "What we have now is a situation where we've finally settled the self-destructive battles of the past twelve years, and may have a chance to make some progress."

THIS time, the President seems to have considered his transition more carefully. He took a long vacation. (He didn't take one last time, and soon regretted it.) He sized up his new audiences: Republicans and historians. He made a flurry of phone calls. An early one went to Senator John McCain, of Arizona, who is perhaps the most outspoken advocate of campaign-finance reform—an area of no small interest to the President these days, after the egregious fleecing of donors which he superintended during the campaign. (Clinton told McCain that he *loved* campaign-finance reform.) The Republican most likely to be spending quiet weekends at Camp David this winter, though, is the Senate Majority Leader—Trent Lott, of Mississippi. He and Clinton had a private, "table-setting" conversation before

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A REPRINT OF FRANK RICH'S OP-ED COLUMN IN The New York Times

Calling Bob Dole, William Bennett, Joseph Lieberman, Al and Tipper Gore and foes of depraved pop culture everywhere: The next Hollywood exhibit awaiting your moral outrage is being unveiled as the gala closing-night attraction at the New York Film Festival tomorrow night and by Oscar® time will be playing at a multiplex near you.

It's a movie co-produced by Oliver Stone that features explicit bisexuality and drug use, not to mention a comic sequence in which the hero appears wrapped in a diaper made from the American flag. As if that's not enough, the hero is a pornographer -- the publisher of Hustler magazine, Larry Flynt (played by Woody Harrelson) -- and the villain is the founder of the Moral Majority, the Rev. Jerry Falwell. The heroine? Flynt's wife, an underage erotic dancer and AIDS-stricken junkie -- portrayed by an admitted heroin user, the rock star Courtney Love.

After watching which truly offers something to offend everyone, our cultural guardians may wish they had not wasted so much firepower on "Natural Born Killers," "Striptease," and "Mighty Morphin Power Rangers." Even before the film's release, its poster -- which mixes religious, sexual and flag imagery to comic effect -- has been censored by Hollywood's own trade organization, the Motion Picture Association of America.

The more condemnation, perhaps the better. Notoriety sells tickets, and deserves a huge adult audience, because it is the most timely and patriotic movie of the year. Based on the true-life story of Flynt's courtroom battles to protect his freedom of speech, this film is an eloquent antidote to anyone who would jawbone the First Amendment to clean up the grotesque excesses of our culture.

What makes the movie so effective is that it doesn't sentimentalize or airbrush Larry Flynt. Hustler, with its nasty debasements of women and crude, infantile humor, is depicted with untitillating honesty, and its creator often comes across as a pig. But when he is found guilty by a Virginia jury of causing "emotional distress" to Falwell by caricaturing him as an alcoholic, incestuous sinner in a Hustler parody, Flynt takes the case to the Supreme Court.

His victory, in a unanimous 1988 decision written by Chief Justice William Rehnquist, makes for all its scabrous humor, surprisingly moving -- not because we root for its hero but because we root for the Constitution. Had Flynt lost, the effect would have been to gut libel law and chill any writer, cartoonist or entertainer who mocks a public figure. The importance of the case is perfectly summed up by a line of Flynt's: "If the First Amendment will protect a scumbag like me, then it will protect all of you. Because I'm the worst."

To understand why this movie has been made now, and with such urgency, one need only listen to its director, Milos Forman. A two-time Oscar® winner (for "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" and "Amadeus"), Mr. Forman lost both his parents to Nazi death camps as a child; his filmmaking career began in postwar Stalinist Czechoslovakia. "I spent my most sensitive years in two totalitarian regimes," he recalled last week at his home in New York, on the day he attended a 60th birthday tribute to his friend and former fellow dissident Vaclav Havel. "The Nazis and Communists began by attacking pornography, homosexuals -- it always starts very innocently."

Mr. Forman is concerned about the growing power of American cultural commissars on the secular and religious right. He worries about his movie's fate in some corners of the country. At a time when even the word "liberal" is considered obscene -- another alarming bit of déjà vu for Mr. Forman -- the film's only political ally may be Rudolph Giuliani, whose wife, Donna Hanover, appears in it (and brilliantly so) in the satirically drawn role of the evangelist Ruth Carter Stapleton.

But most of all, the director worries whether Americans take too much for granted the Bill of Rights that he, a naturalized citizen, finds so precious. "The United States is the strongest country not because it's the biggest or richest," he says, "but because it's the freest." His provocative movie is not only a celebration of that freedom but, in our current political climate, a likely test of just how far that freedom really extends.

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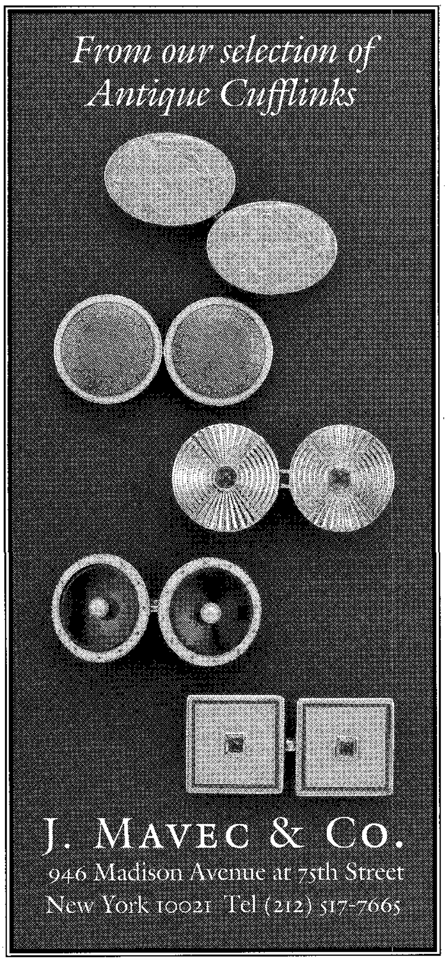
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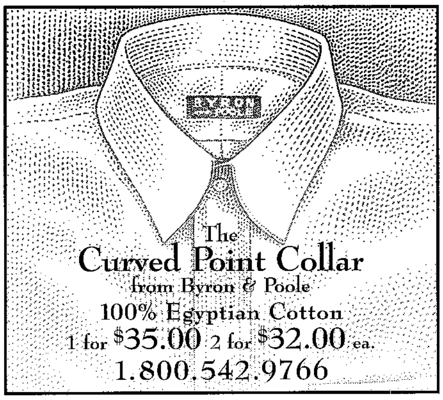

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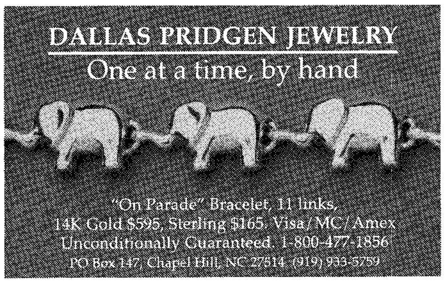
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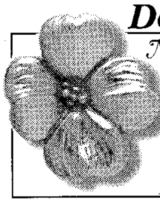
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Clinton's public meeting with the other congressional leaders—pointedly bipartisan this time—a week after the election. "I think he's making the extra effort to butter up Trent," a person close to the House Republican leadership said. "Trent's the new guy. Newt and Dick Armey experienced the full Clinton after the last election."

The naming of Senator William Cohen, Republican of Maine, as Secretary of Defense may have been "a very bold and exciting move," as the Secretary-designate said last week, but, according to some congressional Republicans, a more important courting gesture was the President's appointment of the North Carolina businessman Erskine Bowles as his new chief of staff. Unlike Leon Panetta and George Stephanopoulos, "he comes out of the private sector, and that means a lot to us," a person close to the Senate Republican leadership said. Bowles did serve as deputy chief of staff for much of the first Clinton term, and he became known for his orderliness. The *Wall Street Journal* ran a front-page story devoted to Bowles's restructuring of the Presidential schedule; time spent in staff meetings was substantially reduced, it pointed out, and time devoted to "thinking" was substantially increased. He also made clear his devotion to the idea of a balanced budget. In the spring of 1995, Bowles was one of the few White House staff members who sided with the furtive (and ambipartisan) consultant Dick Morris in favor of Clinton's announcing that he intended to achieve balance. After the President did that, in a televised Oval Office address, Bowles pumped his hand and said, "Thank you, Mr. President. You've made it possible for me to go home again."

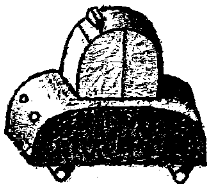
The quest for a balanced budget (or the appearance of one) will be at the heart of national politics for the next six months. This is a peculiar obsession, a combination of hope, smoke, and alchemy that—so far, at least—has provided only symbolic comfort: conveying to the public and the financial markets an illusion of order. The two sides came close to an agreement in early 1996, but chose not to settle. The President was happy to use the Republicans' initial, impolitic proposals for relatively large Medicare reductions and a large tax cut as a campaign bludgeon. In truth, the parties were within forty-five billion dollars of each other on Medicare—a pittance in this game. They have now come closer. Their respective alchemists—the White House Office of Management and Budget and the Congressional Budget Office—are both rejiggering their deficit estimates for the year 2002 to make them seem more manageable. There are other signals. In recent weeks, the Republicans have claimed an ideological affinity with the "targeted tax cuts" for college-tuition costs that the President proposed during the campaign; this is a step away from the across-the-board cuts they've wanted in the past. (They are hoping that the President will reciprocate with a more generous capital-gains-tax treatment, and he may: strategic retreats toward larger tax cuts are the easiest kind for a politician.)

There will be the appearance of a tussle over Medicare. Senator Lott is insisting that the President "go first" with his balanced-budget proposal. This will enable Republicans to hoot and screech for a few days when the President proposes Medicare cuts. If the screeching stays within reason, it will be followed by intense negotiations. "It won't be nearly so bad as it sounds," the person close to the Senate Republican leadership remarked. "People are going to be surprised by how well it goes if the President makes any sort of gesture on Medicare. You know the saying: Hug your friends hard and your enemies harder. Well, we're going to hug this thing very hard."

Representative Barney Frank, of the forgotten House Democrats, offers the requisite sports metaphor to describe the coming legislative season: "There's a certain kind of boxing match that's called a 'waltz.' The fighters beat each other silly for a while, then decide, 'We've been slugging each other long enough—let's just hang on till the end of the fight and get paid.' I think we're going to govern in a fairly boring fashion."

The logic is compelling. The President will be able to make "history" by passing the first ostensibly balanced budget since Eisenhower's. The Republicans, nervous about what they've taken to calling their "communication" problem—that is, the extreme difficulty they've been having in talking to women—are desperate to appear more reasonable. "Men tend to see politics as a contest of principles. Women see things more practically," Daniel Yankelovich, the opinion researcher, told me. "Shutting down the government was a concrete example of the different gender reactions. Men weren't so bothered by it. Women said, 'Come *on*, grow *up*, fellas!' "

After the excesses of the past two years, "Republicans clearly understand we have to change," Senator McCain said. "We had the government shutdown debacle. We had the Whitewater debacle, in which a committee chairman with no credibility"—Senator Alfonse D'Amato, of New York—"predicted specific outcomes with no basis. The American people got turned off by it. But we began to redeem ourselves with some positive acts at the end of the session." Indeed, it can be argued that the era of feral partisanship began to give way to a softer, sweeter millennial sensibility last June, when the Republican leadership quietly decided to set aside the political needs of Bob Dole and pass some legislation, even if it meant making Bill Clinton look more effective. Welfare reform, the increase in the minimum wage, the Kennedy-Kassebaum health-insurance modification all breezed into law. "The public attitude toward Congress flipped around and became positive almost overnight," Mark Penn, who polls for the President, says. The sudden burst of productivity may have saved control of Congress for the Republicans. "They had a good taste of the electoral benefits of bipartisanship and may want to keep it going," Penn says. "I think the idea mix last summer, the combination of welfare reform with minimum-wage and health-care adjustments—fiscal restraint combined with some social problem-solving, one from Column A and one from Column B—is a pretty good model."



Of course, Kenneth Starr or one of the other special prosecutors may save the contentious status quo with a batch of indictments, but what happens if he doesn't? "I've been going around to the usual run of post-election forums, and it's been sort of surreal," says William Kristol, the publisher of the conservative *Weekly Standard* and ordinarily an avid partisan. "There's a complacency on the part of Republicans, an assumption that the Democrats will fail. But I think there is a very real possibility that Clinton will be able to govern successfully. He has Bob Rubin and Alan Greenspan"—the Secretary of the Treasury and the chairman of the Federal Reserve—"running the economy, a fairly conservative team. He has brought in Erskine Bowles. He seems to be pursuing an activist foreign policy: Strobe Talbott had a piece in *Foreign Affairs* that seemed more of a Reaganite document than any Republican speech I've heard recently. I'm sure they'll fudge the numbers and get to a balanced budget. He'll keep his moderate cultural-conservative tone on 'values' issues, and gently try to remoralize society. And now I see he's citing Teddy Roosevelt on the need for National Purpose, National Greatness. I think that's a good thing."

Greatness is a difficult trick for a President. It almost always requires outside intervention in the form of a crisis. Bill Clinton's interest in Theodore Roosevelt, after four years of trying to emulate the other Roosevelt, is telling: T.R. is the only American President to have approached greatness in a placid time. But his success seems almost to have been a matter of will, a consequence of the force of his personality, rather than the lasting effect of any actual achievements. (Woodrow Wilson accomplished far more in terms of "progressive" legislation, and won a war besides, but remains an essentially peripheral figure in the national mythology.) Actually, Clinton seems the opposite of Theodore Roosevelt. He is a politician who satisfies the needs of his audience instead of imposing his will on it. And so the talk among Clinton partisans about what he might do to leave a historic legacy seems largely futile. The national placidity that the President so successfully courted during the campaign militates against any grand escapades, foreign or domestic. And history, his final audience, has little sympathy for incrementalists. More to the point, history is immune to empathy: it cannot be charmed, or seduced. It is one gazelle too distant and elusive to be stalked. ♦

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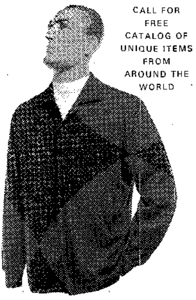

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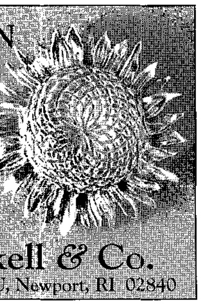

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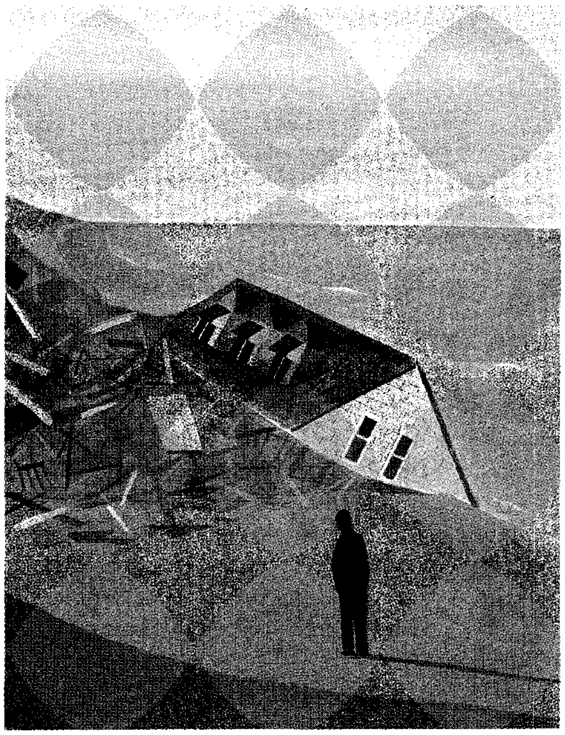
OUR FAR-FLUNG CORRESPONDENTS

BEACHLESS

Hurricanes wreck the shoreline—but not as much as our efforts to save it.

BY WADE GRAHAM

THE three townships on Topsail Island, North Carolina, are built, literally, on sand. Lying halfway between Cape Lookout and Cape Fear, a mile off the mainland in the Atlantic, Topsail is twenty-six miles long but no more than a few hundred yards wide—a bead in the three-hundred-mile necklace of barrier islands that adorn the North Carolina coast. In summer, the island's population swells from four thousand to forty or fifty thousand, drawn by a plenitude of sun, sand, and surf. Most of the time, the weather encourages beachcombing, but every so often, without much warning, all hell breaks loose, and Topsail reverts to something resembling its natural state—an uninhabitable wisp of sand.



Geologists have a term for what we buy with the billions spent on solutions to erosion: Newjerseyization.

GEOFFREY PARKER

Two such occasions occurred this summer. On July 12th, Hurricane Bertha made landfall just to the south, near Wilmington. Bertha pounded Topsail and other barrier islands, chewing away protective dunes and damaging scores of structures. Topsail survived more or less intact, and relieved residents began the task of cleaning up. Less than two months later, though, on the night of September 5th, Hurricane Fran, with winds spinning out from its center at a hundred and fifteen miles per hour, roared up, following Bertha's track. By morning, Topsail looked as if it had been bombed. The main road was impassable; three new channels had been gouged through the island's midsection. Sand, washed over the top of the island by a storm surge estimated to be eleven feet above normal sea level, covered neighborhoods to a depth of five feet. Houses lay smashed like toys.

The devastation should have come as no surprise. The island got its name, in the eighteenth century, because its extreme narrowness and flatness allowed sailors on one side of it to glimpse the topsails of pirate ships hidden on the opposite side. Geologists have long listed Topsail as among the most storm-vulnerable barrier islands on the Atlantic coast. Nevertheless, by the early nineteen-sixties the southern and middle sections of the island had become the towns of Topsail Beach and Surf City, respectively. In the early eighties, in defiance of warnings from geologists, the town that would become North Topsail Beach was built on the exceptionally narrow north end. This summer, more than half of its structures were either heavily damaged or destroyed by Fran.

The federal government calls what happened on Topsail—as it calls the effects of so many stormy assaults on America's heavily populated coastal areas—a "natural disaster." While hurricanes are indeed acts of nature, their consequences are no more "natural" than a car crash caused by a reckless driver is accidental but are the outcome of life and property having rashly been placed in harm's way. In the aftermath of Fran, many people wondered whether the towns of Topsail Island should be rebuilt. Among them was John Wells, a coastal geologist at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, who had long warned against building on North Topsail Beach. Wells said, "We knew the kinds of consequences that would be suffered from a hit, and all that came true. Now's the time to plant ourselves rigidly on that piece of real estate—and others—and say 'No.' "

I HAD more than a merely morbid interest in watching Fran's progress on the Weather Channel. This past spring, my father and stepmother had moved from coast to coast, leaving their house, high on the mountain front above Santa Barbara, California, for a condominium in the city of Wilmington, which is just north of Cape Fear. I had spent most of my childhood in Santa Barbara, a dangerous paradise stalked by earthquakes, floods, and fires, and I didn't need reminding that only five years ago the house I grew up in had been levelled by a brushfire sparked by arsonists and driven by high winds. When my father told me that they were moving to a "safer, more predictable" part of the country, I thought about how hard it is for so many people—myself included—to resist the allure of living on a coastal edge.

I arrived in Wilmington a few days after Fran's departure. My father's rented condo, on the mainland, behind Wrightsville Beach, was undamaged except for a one-foot hole in the ceiling through which the rain continued to pour. He had been lucky. The house next door had been left with no roof at all, and the one two doors down had an enormous oak in its living room. The damage on the beaches was reported to be far worse. I headed out in my rental car for a look but was turned back by police with the explanation that the coast was under a "state of emergency." I thought about renting a boat, but every marina I called had been smashed up. Finally, I paddled over to Wrightsville Beach in a kayak, keeping close to the reeds for cover. Before I reached the island, I was intercepted by an official from the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, who zoomed up in a speedboat and escorted me away. He explained that looting had been reported; I wondered if he suspected me of plotting to paddle away with a refrigerator.

When I did get out to the beaches, I saw a world transformed: in the mud, boats stood upended on their masts; debris from houses lay scattered in clumps; and palm trees stood headless. Of the twenty-four deaths that were attributed to Fran, the most haunting report was that of a bedridden seventy-five-year-old woman who had been set adrift on her mattress in the marsh across the street from where her Surf City mobile home was parked. Officials conjectured that she had floated on the mattress for most of the night.

JIM HUNT, the governor of North Carolina, estimated that the damage inflicted by Bertha and Fran combined would cost between five and six billion dollars to repair. Although much of it would be shouldered by private insurers and by the federally backed National Flood Insurance Program, the federal government was also expected to contribute in other ways. But the effects of Fran wouldn't officially constitute a natural disaster until the President said so. This happened almost immediately: after a quick visit to the Governor (a Democrat), in Raleigh, Clinton declared fifty-eight counties in the state "disaster areas," thereby opening the way for federal emergency funds. To date, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has allocated four hundred and sixty-one million dollars for damage caused by Fran, and that amount will rise. At the same time, North Carolina's Senator Jesse Helms (a Republican up for reëlection) graciously supported increased funding for FEMA and, after its budget was passed, boasted, "This is a sizable victory for the people of North Carolina."

But what sort of victory was it? Wouldn't these vast rescue funds merely

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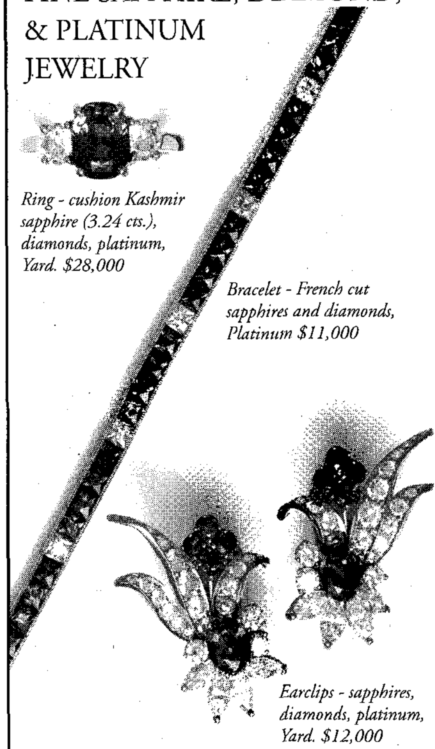

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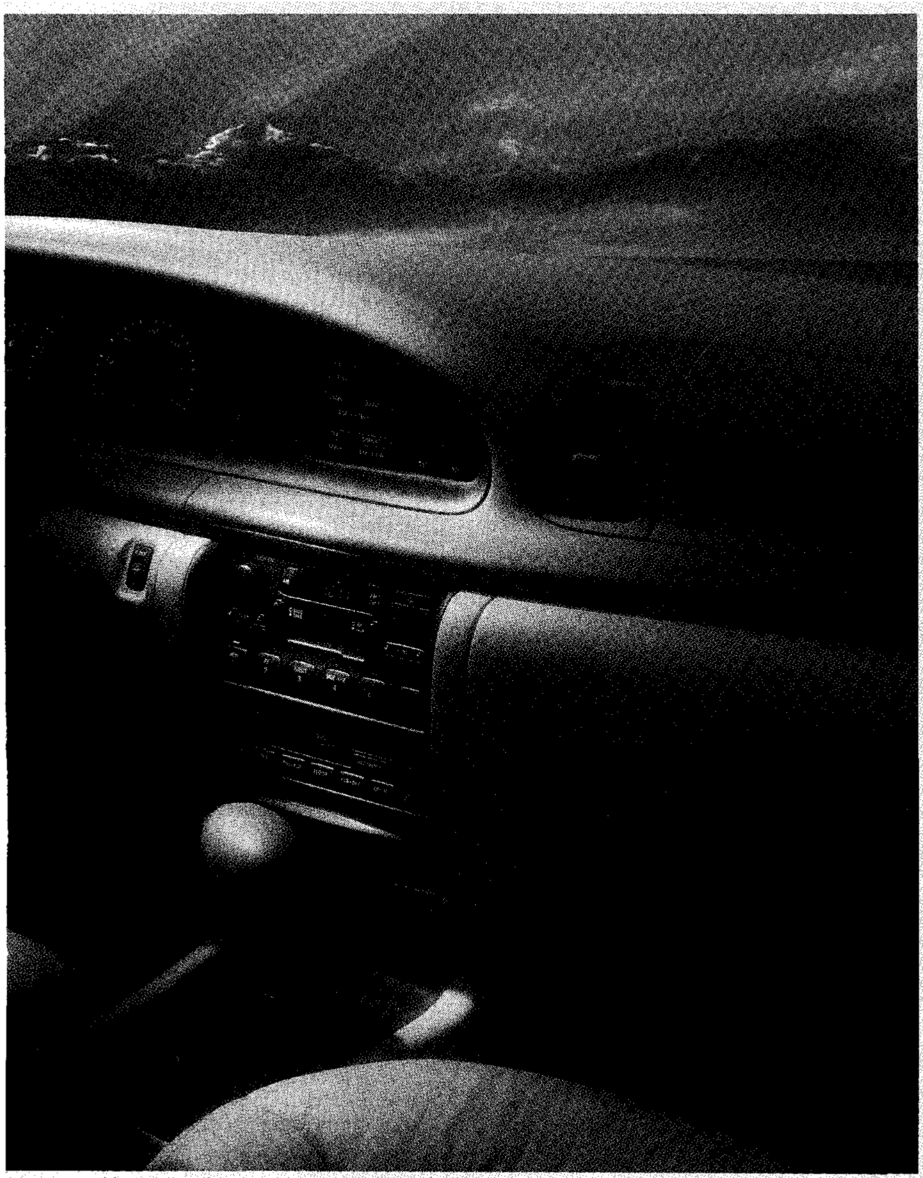

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encourage people not only to rebuild on the beaches but to replace smaller buildings with larger, more expensive ones—in keeping with the perverse pattern of urban renewal that follows hurricanes in America—and thus set up an even costlier disaster down the road? For at least two communities, this was a foregone conclusion. Wrightsville and Carolina Beach, a few miles south of Topsail, had suffered the least structural damage, because they were sitting behind government-supplied piles of sand—artificial beaches and dune lines that had been built, maintained, and largely paid for by the United States Army Corps of Engineers. These communities had been the recipients of what the Corps calls its "beach renourishment projects," a program that a growing number of critics have come to see as tantamount to money being poured into the sea. One of the most articulate critics is Orrin H. Pilkey, a Duke University geologist, whose book "The Corps and the Shore," written with Katharine L. Dixon (and published this year), is widely regarded as the most thorough critique of American coastal policy ever written. In Fran's wake, Pilkey said, "North Carolina has just increased the amount of shoreline by probably twenty-five miles that needs immediate nourishment, so the federal taxpayer has in theory just taken another giant punch in the solar plexus."

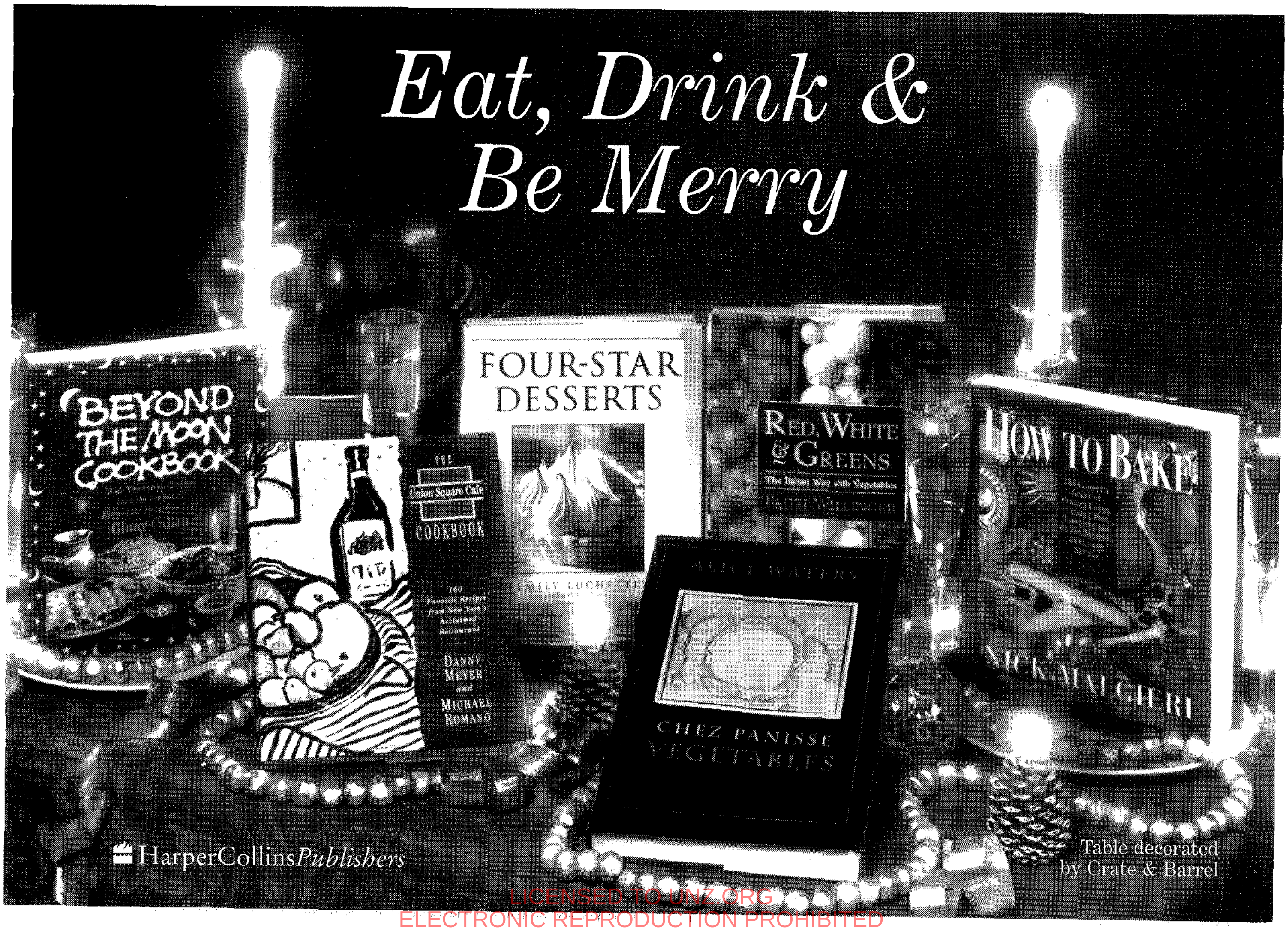
The emblem of the United States Army Corps of Engineers is, fittingly enough, a fortified castle: what began for the purpose of national defense against human invaders has, over the years, become a military campaign against natural forces. The story of the Army's involvement with the beaches is a textbook definition of "mission creep." In 1775, the Second Continental Congress created the forerunner of the Corps to build battlefield fortifications in the war against Britain, and in subsequent conflicts the unit's activities were expanded to include the construction of defenses against naval threats and the management of navigable waterways. By the eighteen-twenties, the Corps was building jetties and seawalls to protect the nation's harbors—and the cities that lay behind them—from storms and erosion. In this century, the Corps has spent billions of dollars to deploy and maintain its arsenal of engineered solutions to natural depredations on all the country's shorelines, including those of the Great Lakes—solutions consisting of revetments, jetties, seawalls, groins, bulkheads, breakwaters, and renourishment projects.

Coastal geologists have a term for the results of many of these efforts: "Newjerseyization." They assert that, while the construction of hardened structures may save buildings, it actually accelerates beach erosion, bringing about the gradual disappearance of the natural resource that inspired people to build there in the first place. New Jersey was the first state to undertake intensive development and fortification of its beaches, beginning with the town of Cape May. Throughout the nineteenth century, residents of the fashionable resort kept their distance from the sea, building well behind the dunes. In 1911, boat owners convinced the federal government to stabilize the inlet to Cape May Harbor to the north. The harbor jetties interrupted the natural flow of sand to the southerly beaches, prompting the town to build groins to catch what little flow was left. After what came to be known as the Ash Wednesday nor'easter of 1962 flooded the town, the Corps built a mile-long rock seawall. The flooding continued. By 1968, the situation had become so grave that local officials made a desperate appeal to Washington. "Our community is nearly financially insolvent," they wrote. "We have finally reached a point where we no longer have beaches to erode." Down the same path went Ocean City, Atlantic City, Asbury Park, and so on, until fifty per cent of New Jersey's once famously wide strands had been reduced to rubble: mile after mile of seawalls facing angry waves and the wrecks of previously built structures. Newjerseyization is well under way in other states: twenty-seven per cent of South Carolina's developed shoreline is armored, as is eighty per cent of Georgia's, seventy per cent of Virginia's, and almost a hundred per cent of New Hampshire's tiny but beautiful coast. Even on the Hawaiian island of Oahu, which is economically dependent on its beaches, nearly a quarter of the sandy beaches have deteriorated or disappeared as a result of some seven decades of beach construction.

Behind this failed policy, says Orrin Pilkey, is "a fundamental misunderstanding of the beach." Far from needing protection, he points out, beaches *are* protection—the continent's defense against the sea. The beach performs a kind of judo: it absorbs storm assaults by changing its shape, then rebuilds itself during the periods when waves are relatively gentle. Pilkey notes that a beach's set of responses to changes in the sea are so subtle and effective, so seemingly intelligent, that geologists call it beach behavior. During storms, the beach gives up to waves sand that has been stockpiled in dunes, and the waves then carry the sand seaward and drop it on the bottom. This additional sand makes the beach flatter, and thereby forces waves to shoal and break earlier, thus lessening erosion. When calm seas return, the sand that has been moved offshore is slowly carried landward again by the orbital motion of gentler waves, allowing the beach's defenses to rebuild. Once a beach becomes "engineered," it is, in effect, prohibited from responding to storm waves by flattening and becomes progressively steeper, thus increasing destructive wave energy instead of absorbing it. As Pilkey has said, "seawalls destroy beaches, period."

HARDENED structures have been banned in recent years by Maine, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The Corps, for its part, has increasingly turned to beach renourishment. Over the past forty-five years, more than two hundred million cubic yards of sand has gone to renourish American beaches. Sand is expensive—as much as five dollars per cubic yard—and the cost of a new beach can run to about two million dollars per square mile. In a typical Corps project, sixty-five per cent of the cost is borne by federal taxpayers; the remainder is picked up by state and local governments. Those who benefit most are often the very property owners who contributed to the erosion in the first place. In the early nineteen-seventies, Miami Beach's famous strand dwindled to nearly nothing after hotel owners built walls too far seaward. Between 1975 and 1982, ten and a half miles of beach, from the south end of Miami Beach to Bal Harbour, were replaced at a cost of fifty-five million dollars. On South Carolina's Newjerseyized Grand Strand, the Corps is renourishing twenty-five miles of beach at a cost of fifty-four million dollars. The projected cost for a proposed renourishment on Fire Island, New York, is fifty-nine million dollars; in the long run it is expected to be twice that much. Island homeowners will be asked to contribute only four million dollars, as part of the local contribution. The list goes on and on.

As geologists point out, renourishment effectively institutionalizes erosion: once you have done it, you must do it again—and then again—since renourished beaches tend to wash away faster than the originals do. This happens because renourishment replaces only limited parts of a total beach system, which can extend for miles offshore. Once the new sand is in place, the beach is free to erode the stretch again to keep the overall system in balance. All but a handful of renourished beaches have had to be rebuilt at intervals of several years, and some have impetuously vanished almost overnight. In 1982, a new five-million-



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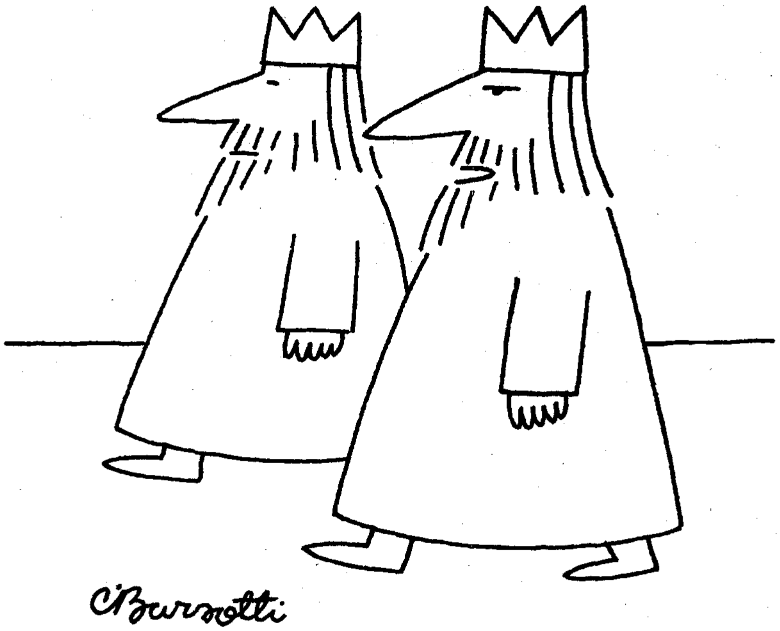
dollar beach at Ocean City, New Jersey, headed out to sea in two and a half months. Rarely does a renourished beach last as long as the Corps maintains it will at the time that the project is authorized. Pilkey writes, "On the basis of our studies of replenished beaches as well as our understanding of modern oceanographic principles, we have concluded that virtually all of the . . . design principles that the Corps uses to predict beach durability are wrong." The Corps, he argues, relies on deterministic computer models to design projects and downplays the value of field observation. Storms, which, of course, have a far greater impact on beaches than do long periods of calm weather, are poorly factored into the models. The Corps typically rationalizes destructive weather as "unusual" or "unexpected."

Corps projects have frequently cost taxpayers more to save structures than the structures are worth to their owners. Cost overruns, which are reminiscent of procurement practices in other branches of the military, are common. According to Pilkey, they come about because "the corps consistently assumes maintenance under ideal conditions," rather than under stormy ones, and has often provided "misleading analysis of benefits" versus costs in the estimates it gives to Congress. Carolina Beach and Wrightsville Beach happen to be two of the most frequently replenished beaches in the country: since 1965, they have been built every three and four years, respectively. By Pilkey's reckoning, the cost of saving Wrightsville has been many times as great as the original figure. Tom Jarrett, the chief of the Coastal, Hydrology, and Hydraulics section at the Corps's Wilmington district, concedes that the beaches needed much more sand than the Corps first estimated, but he counters that the two projects were among the Corps's first and largest; both, he says, were planned in the early nineteen-sixties using the data and techniques that were then available. "The technology was in its infancy at the time," he told me, and he maintained that lessons learned since have improved both the durability of renourishment projects and the accuracy of their cost estimates.

PILKEY and other coastal geologists argue that the Corps's efforts are largely futile, if only because the sea levels around the United States are rising between one and three feet per century, a rate that may well increase as a result of global warming, and the beaches are moving with them—landward, of course. Between eighty and ninety per cent of the American shoreline is eroding, which suggests that America, contrary to its expansionist past, may have an inland future. On the West Coast, where mountains plunge into the sea and the continental shelf is narrow and steep, coastlines have moved relatively



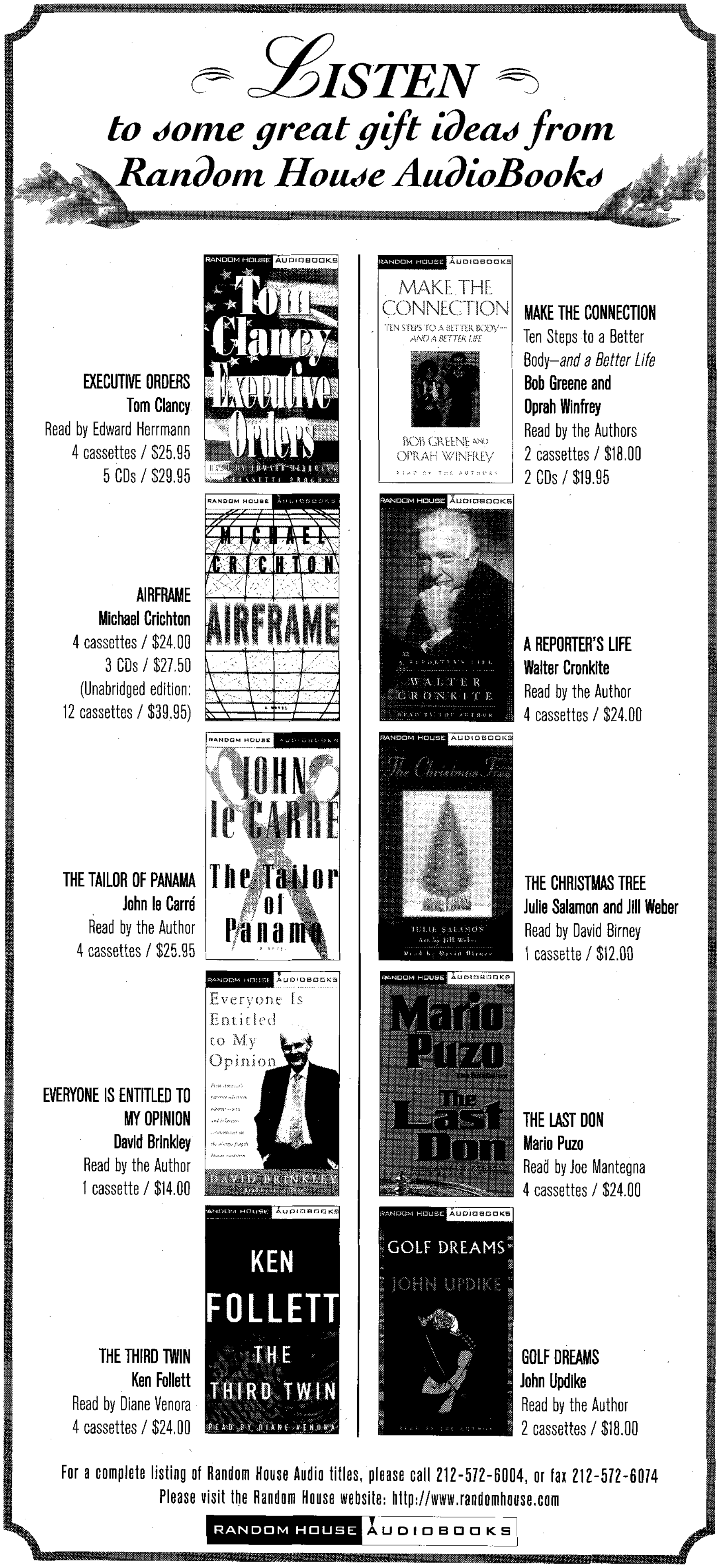
"Yeah, everybody says I'm hard to shop for, too."

little over time, but on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, where the broad coastal plain has a slope so shallow as to be all but imperceptible, a succession of small rises in sea level can add up to a dramatic retreat of the shoreline. In many places, the slope is 1:2,000 or less, which is to say that a rise of one foot could push the shoreline back two thousand feet.

On these coastlines, some beaches survive by a subtle process of strategic retreat known as barrier-island migration. Barrier islands are sections of land that have become isolated from the mainland as the sea breaks through and fills estuaries and the low spots behind them. To maintain themselves above water, the islands must conserve their limited sand supply by moving sand to their lagoon-facing side as their seaward side is eroded by waves. The islands accomplish this in three ways: with the help of wind, through inlet currents, and by the process of overwash, in which storm waves wash sand over the island so that the island literally rolls over itself, like the tread of a bulldozer. As the sea level continues to rise, the islands migrate landward. When barrier islands are prohibited from moving—are "stabilized," in the engineers' lexicon—they become beachless.

Four days after Fran struck, I ran into the Corps's Tom Jarrett at the south end of Wrightsville Beach. An affable man, who was dressed in crisp white pants and a polo shirt, Jarrett stood on the sand enjoying a lollipop and surveying the relative success of the Corps's handiwork. Wrightsville Beach, even more than Carolina Beach, had escaped serious structural damage, although the Corps's dune line had clearly been levelled over most of the island. Jarrett told me, "We felt that these projects did what they were supposed to do. They did reduce wave-impact damage, they did eliminate erosion-associated damage, and we felt that probably in just this one event we paid back everything we paid into it." That cost, he said, had been about thirty-six million dollars since 1965—twenty-two million seven hundred thousand for Carolina Beach and thirteen million seven hundred thousand for Wrightsville. For beachfront-property owners, this has been a very good deal.

Jarrett went on to tell me that he was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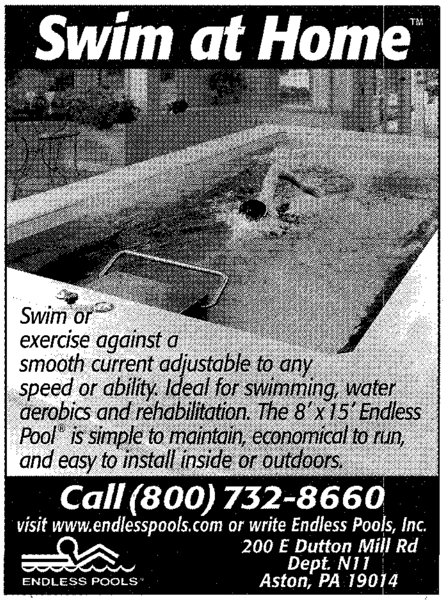
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"not a believer" that barrier-island migration was "currently happening." But even what I had seen with untrained eyes contradicted that. The previous day, I had finally been able to travel to several beaches, including that of Topsail Island, with the U.N.C. Wilmington coastal geologist William Cleary. On Topsail, what we saw—in terms of geologic time—was an island in motion. A continuous series of washover marks extended back over the beach, and protruding from the surf were layers of black, semi-fossilized peat and tree stumps, remnants of a marsh that had been on the landward side of the island a few thousand years earlier.

It was Jarrett's view that the peat and the stumps attested to erosion, not migration. And, indeed, most barrier islands do go through long periods of steady, even erosion before they revive themselves through migration. Cleary and his students point to substantial migration. In hundreds of dives far out to sea, Cleary has found remnants of lagoonal sea life, such as oyster beds—ancient relics left in the islands' path. Moreover, he has found very little sand on seabeds, where the Corps of Engineers had assumed that there was a bountiful supply. Cleary believes that several of the developed barrier islands, including the northern section of Topsail, are now entering phases of dangerously accelerated roll-over. "It's almost the end of Topsail right now in a few places, because the marsh and lagoon vegetation are right up against the road, and the road is almost into the surf zone in many places," he told me. "North Topsail is about to take off."

Tom Jarrett views this geologic evidence in more pragmatic terms. "In an ideal world," he said, "I'd agree with Orrin Pilkey—you probably wouldn't want anybody living out there. But we don't live in an ideal world. The development's there, so you've got a choice of either letting it go—and you absorb the losses—or, if the judgment's made that the development is worth protecting, then you protect it. In the real world, it boils down to economics."

Of course, judgments about what is worth protecting are largely dictated by political economics—the politics of sand. The Corps of Engineers is just one of more than fifty federal programs that fund coastal development—that pay for everything from roads and utilities to disaster relief. The largest of these is the National Flood Insurance Program. Beth Millemann, who is the executive director of the Coast Alliance, a Washington-based watchdog group for environmental issues, calls the N.F.I.P. "one of the largest domestic liabilities after the Social Security program," with three hundred billion dollars' worth of policies in force but typically no more than five hundred million in reserves. The program is currently running a deficit of about a billion dollars. Congress enacted the N.F.I.P., in 1968, "to constrict the development of land which is exposed to flood damage and minimize damage caused by flood losses." The N.F.I.P. has, in effect, provided a financial safety net for developers to expand construction in hazardous areas. The House passed legislation to reform the N.F.I.P. in 1991, and a similar bill was approved by a House committee two years later, but in both instances the bills were scuttled in the Senate by Alfonse D'Amato, Republican of New York. Originally a co-sponsor of the first bill, D'Amato changed his tune in response to fierce pressure from Fire Island homeowners.

On October 12th of this year, President Clinton signed a $3.8-billion Corps of Engineers authorization bill—sections of which he had initially opposed—in part because it contained a piece of environmental restoration that was popular in Florida, a swing electoral state. The legislation is a jumble of approvals of and modifications to more than two hundred projects, affecting dozens of states and Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia—a little something for everyone. Even though environmental-impact studies have yet to be written for many of these projects, the bill passed easily. Among other things, it directs the Corps to "encourage" the beach-renourishment program "on a comprehensive and coördinated basis."

On September 26th and 27th, three weeks after Fran slammed into the coast, twelve citizens who were members of the North Carolina Coastal Resources Commission met in an auditorium in the town of Sunset Beach to determine the future of North Carolina's beaches. Their first challenge was to balance the claims of property owners who sought to rebuild against the commission's mandate to preserve the public's beaches. Bertha and Fran had moved the beaches—and therefore the allowable setback lines—landward, to varying degrees in different places. The question before the commission was how far the beaches had been moved, and, by extension, how many property owners should be allowed to replace beachfront structures. Since Fran had wiped out most of the evidence of the old setback lines, the commissioners found themselves in a guessing game. One by one, property owners and town officials urged them to consider the social and economic factors rather than just the environmental and public-safety issues. The mayor of Topsail Beach said, "We've lost fifteen per cent of our tax base, and we anticipate losing another twenty per cent." Finally, the commissioners decided to make no promises. The lines would have to be drawn in the sand, house by house. For the anxious property owners, there would be more anxiety, and many of them would no longer have an oceanfront home.

The next question before the commissioners involved a request for a variance to a state law that had banned hard beach structures in 1985. Two days before the commission meeting, Governor Hunt had said that the state's rules should be bent for the Shell Island Resort, on Wrightsville Beach, because, he said, "it's an expensive facility that provides lots of jobs." A nine-story hotel-condominium containing a hundred and seventy units on the north end of Wrightsville Beach, the Shell Island Resort had long been threatened by a migrating inlet. When the resort was built, in 1986, that inlet—called Mason's Inlet—was half a mile away. But it had long been apparent that the inlet was moving south at a good clip—more than a hundred feet a year—and state officials had attached a clause to the permit acknowledging the risk of erosion. Shell Island survived Fran, but the inlet had moved still closer, making the resort a sitting duck for the next hurricane or for one of the many nor'easters that thrash the barrier islands every winter. Now the hotel's owners were asking for a variance that would allow them to construct a large sandbag structure to "stabilize the inlet." They promised that the wall would be removed within five years, by which time a "permanent"—but unspecified—solution would be found. The argument they presented was a curious one. According to one official, who spoke for the resort owners, the hotel should never have been allowed in the first place, since the original permit was based on an error in a local copy of a state map which placed the resort outside the so-called "inlet hazard area." Because of this unfortunate mistake, the official argued, the variance should be granted. This logic did not prevail.

On a voice vote, the request was denied, six to five. Afterward, in the parking lot, one of the commissioners, David McNaught, reflected on what had been a wrenching decision: "I think the only answer is the tough answer, the one that says, 'I'm sorry, but you made an improper investment or an investment that only gave you so much reward. Maybe you got to own your condominium for ten years—you don't necessarily get to own it for a hundred.' " ♦

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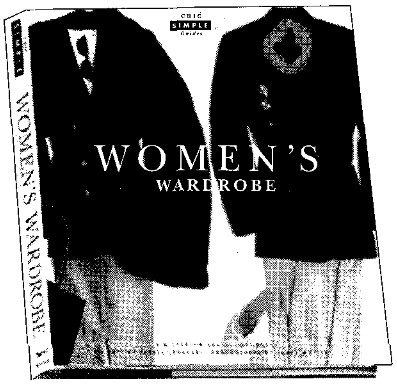

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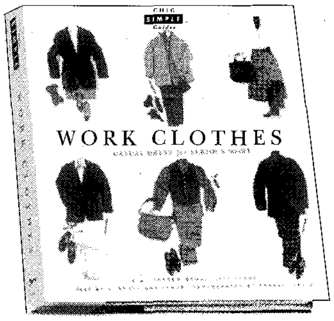

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THE G-MAN AND THE HIT MAN

Gregory Scarpa, Sr., was a mafioso with a penchant for brutality, extortion, and murder. So what was he doing on the F.B.I.'s payroll?

BY FREDRIC DANNEN

IN 1991, the Colombo crime family in Brooklyn went to war with itself: a rebel faction tried to seize control of the family from its boss, Carmine Persico, who was serving life in jail. Gregory Scarpa, Sr., a sixty-three-year-old mobster, immediately took command of the armed faction loyal to Persico. Scarpa was seriously ill: as the result of a blood transfusion, he was H.I.V.-positive. His body had shrivelled from a muscular two hundred and twenty-five pounds to a gaunt one-fifty, his stomach had been removed during surgery, and he digested his food with pancreatic-enzyme pills. Yet Scarpa, a multiple murderer, hadn't slowed down. During the seven months that the shooting war lasted, he could be seen driving with his troops along Avenue U, in Brooklyn, scouting out the social clubs and bars where members of the enemy faction were likely to be found. Sometimes he drove past the rebels' houses, and one night he surprised a rebel who stood on a ladder, with his back turned, hanging Christmas lights on his house. Scarpa rolled down his car window, stuck out his rifle, and picked the man off with three shots. Then he paged his consigliere with the satanic code 666, to signify a fresh kill.

By the time the war ended, in June, 1992, ten people had died, including an innocent man of eighteen who was shot accidentally at a Brooklyn bagel shop. Ten more people had been wounded, among them a fifteen-year-old bystander, who was shot in the head. By far the most violent participant in the war was Scarpa: he murdered four people and wounded two.

At the Manhattan office of the F.B.I., squads had been in place since the eighties to investigate all five New York Mafia families. The supervisor of the squad for the Colombo and Bonanno families was R. Lindley DeVecchio, a dapper, curly-haired man of average height, with a mustache, whom friends and colleagues called Lin. He was a well-liked veteran who had been with the Bureau since the J. Edgar Hoover era, and he had come up through the New York office as an older colleague of Louis Freeh, the current F.B.I. director. The Colombo war presented a unique challenge to DeVecchio. The F.B.I. had a duty to try to prevent violence of every type, even among criminals. If it could learn, perhaps from an informant, when and where a hit team was to be mobilized, the shooters could be intercepted in the act. DeVecchio did, in fact, have an informant inside the Persico faction of the Colombo family. That informant, however, was hardly likely to divulge the activities of the faction's hit team, for the simple reason that he was its leader—Gregory Scarpa himself.

Scarpa had had a secret relationship with the F.B.I. since the early nineteen-sixties, though for two extended periods he had been "closed," which is to say that he and the Bureau had had a falling out, and no agent was authorized to make contact with him. In 1980, DeVecchio had taken the initiative to seek out Scarpa, win back his good graces, and reopen him for the first time in five years. It had been a spectacular career move. Scarpa was no ordinary informant; he was classified as a T.E., for "top echelon," source. DeVecchio was promoted to squad supervisor in 1983. Largely because of his work with Scarpa—and with a second, unidentified mobster, it was said—DeVecchio became one of the Bureau's most admired experts on dealing with informants, and was accorded the honor of being asked to teach informant development to recruits at the F.B.I.'s training academy, in Quantico, Virginia.

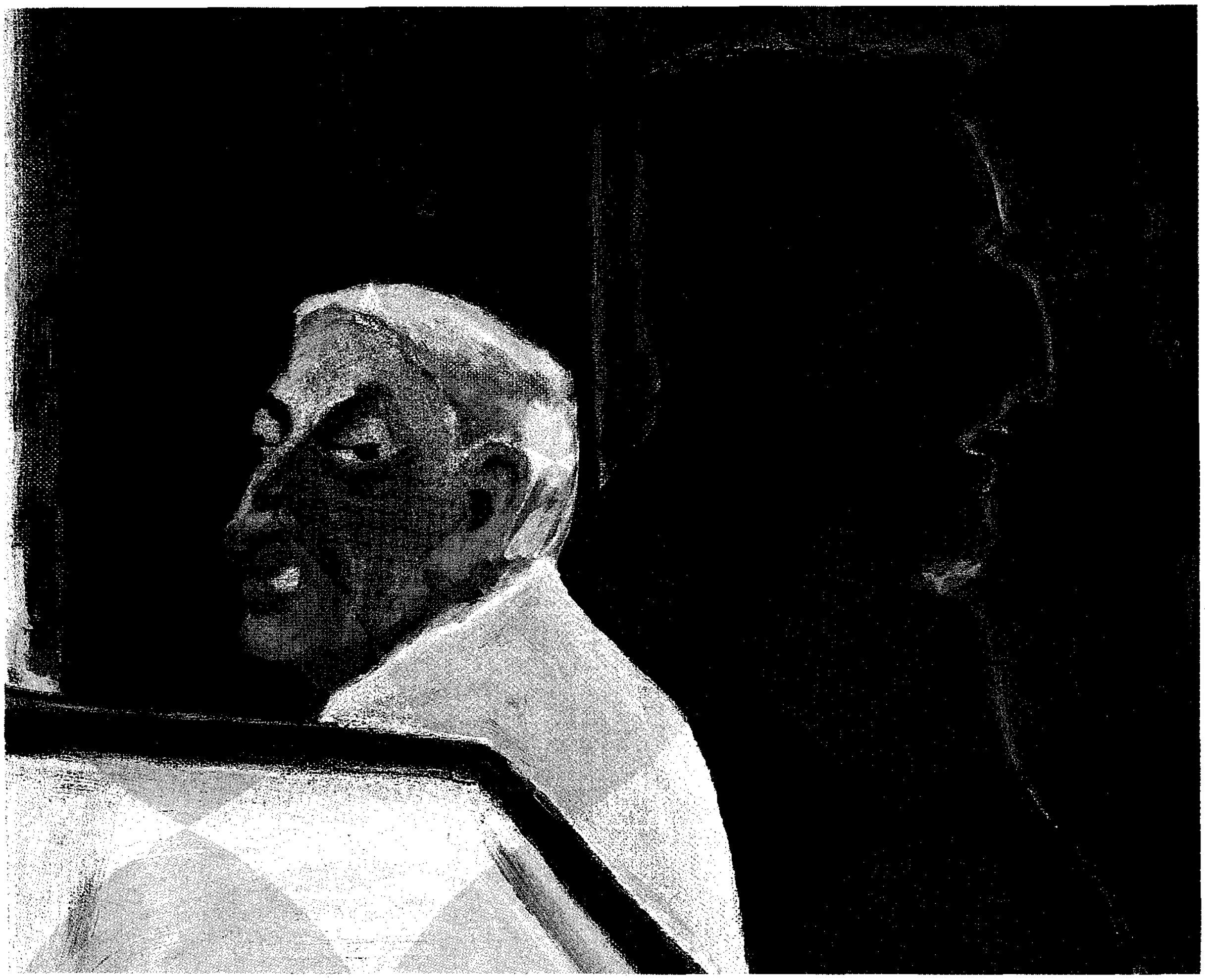
DeVecchio told his students that when it came to building a rapport with an informant, training alone was no substitute for having the right personality. He was a natural himself, even if his upbringing—he is a native of Fresno, California, and the son of a decorated Army colonel buried at Arlington National Cemetery—could not account for it. DeVecchio had become a flashy dresser: at work, he wore a gold bracelet, silk pocket squares, and shirts with monograms. He was also an avid gun collector. He had learned the moves and the jargon of mafiosi on the streets of New York, and he was proud of it. "I've spent virtually twenty-nine years of my life talking to wise guys," he said recently. "You either know how to talk to them or you don't. Many a competent agent doesn't have the street sense." DeVecchio, who has a coarse sense of humor, recalled that his standard opening remark to the students was "I have two college degrees, and my vocabulary has degenerated to four-letter words, and if that bothers you—*fuck you!*"

Even agents with the keenest street sense might have found it intimidating to deal with Scarpa, an imposing man with a deep voice, who once said of himself, "The sign of my birth is Taurus, which is a bull," and who, in a wiretapped conversation during the eighties, convincingly made pronouncements such as "I don't have my money by Thursday, I'll put him right in the fucking hospital." Whatever chemistry existed between him and Lin DeVecchio, it was strong. Informants are supposed to be handled by two agents at a time, and the Bureau discouraged anyone of supervisory rank from operating an informant. Those guidelines were waived for DeVecchio because, he insisted, that was how Scarpa wanted it—there was no other agent he trusted. For more than a decade, DeVecchio was almost always unaccompanied when he met with Scarpa—at an apartment rented by the F.B.I. or in a hotel room, or at some other prearranged location. Sometimes DeVecchio delivered cash to Scarpa. The two men left each other phone messages as "Mr. Dello," their shared code name, and spoke frequently via a special telephone at the F.B.I. building called the hello line, which could not be traced. F.B.I. reports show that during the seven months of the

Colombo war they met or spoke, on the average, at least every ten days.

During the war, DeVecchio maintained that Scarpa was not an active participant, but some younger agents were hearing repeated reports to the contrary. They were alarmed. In 1980, the Department of Justice had issued detailed guidelines: if an informant was suspected of involvement in any "serious act of violence," the supervisor in charge was required to consider closing him and targeting him for arrest. While it was understandable that DeVecchio might be reluctant to close a top-echelon informant—particularly someone who had helped make his career—that seeming reluctance put him at odds with some of his own agents. Eventually, four of them reported to the Bureau that, in an apparent effort to protect Scarpa not merely from arrest but from his enemies in the Mob, DeVecchio had leaked sensitive, confidential information to him. One agent has alleged that DeVecchio became compromised to the point of helping Scarpa locate people that Scarpa wanted to kill.

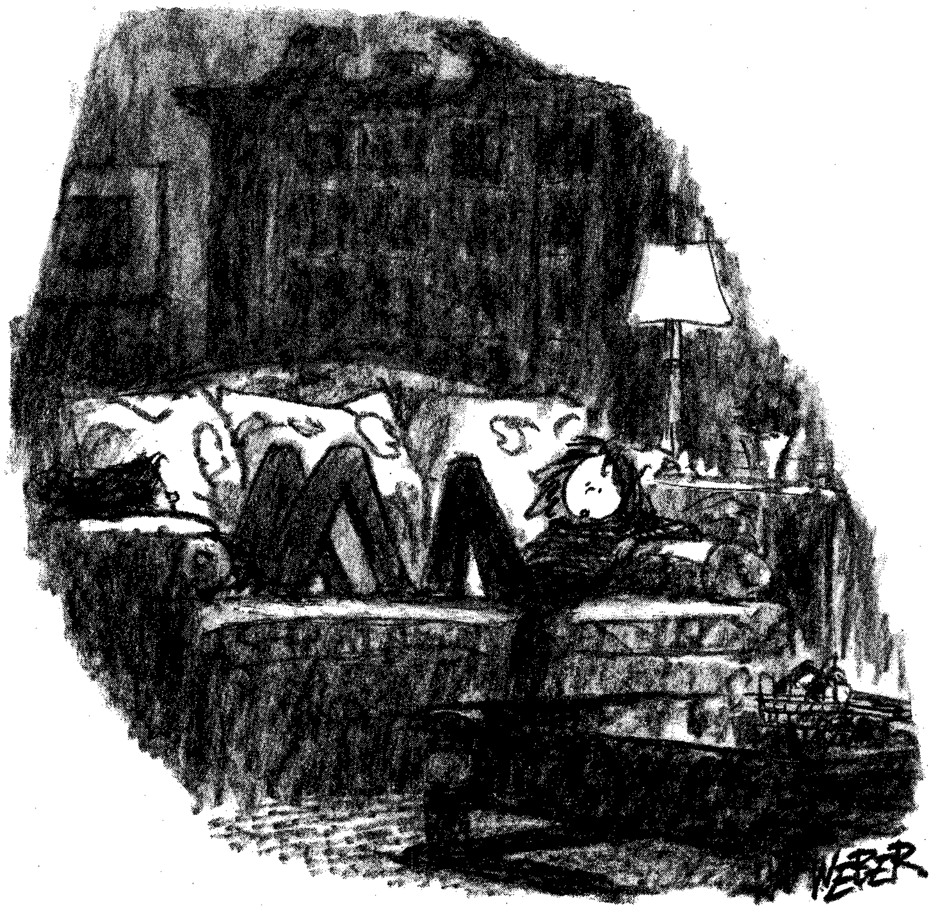
In early 1994, DeVecchio was placed under investigation, but in the meantime he was neither discharged nor put on administrative leave. Instead, he was moved off his squad to another supervisory position—as the F.B.I.'s drug-enforcement coördinator for the entire Northeastern United States, with unrestricted access to classified documents. He continued to hold that job after he informed the Bureau in a sworn statement that he was not amenable to a voluntary polygraph examination, and, incredibly, even after invoking his Fifth Amendment privilege and refusing to testify about his conduct as an F.B.I. supervisor at a hearing last May. No F.B.I. official—not even Louis Freeh or the New York chief, James Kallstrom—would comment on why a man being investigated for leaking information was kept in a post requiring top-security clearance. Douglas Grover, DeVecchio's lawyer, says it is because the Bureau had always understood what DeVecchio was doing to protect a valuable informant, and had approved of his actions. "Whatever Lin did, he did it as an agent of the institution, both literally and figuratively, acting on behalf of the F.B.I.," Grover says.



There were rumors in the Mafia that Scarpa was a snitch, but everyone in the family knew that the government didn't ally itself with killers, and, as one associate pointed out, "He was crazy. He killed a lot. He was nuts."

MICHAEL CRAWFORD

THE confidential informant has been a staple of the F.B.I. for decades; J. Edgar Hoover exhorted agents to develop at least four such informants a year. Unlike coöperating witnesses—criminals who have been caught and have agreed to testify in exchange for leniency—confidential informants are not expected to take the witness stand. They function as undercover agents. From informants, the Bureau learns what phones to tap and what meetings to subject to surveillance. The top-echelon informant is that rare source high enough in a criminal enterprise to provide what the Bureau calls "singular" information, such as a detailed organization chart of the enterprise. Documents made public as a result of the investigation of DeVecchio show that Scarpa periodically supplied information of this kind. On one occasion, for in-



"I hope when I grow up I'll have an amicable divorce."

stance, he gave up the names of three people proposed for membership in the Colombo family—including one who had been sponsored by Scarpa himself.

Criminal informants are often essential for making cases, and courts have long upheld the legality of their use. However, because they are practicing criminals they must be handled with extreme care, so that, in the words of the Justice Department guidelines, "the government itself does not become a violator of the law." The F.B.I. has repeatedly been accused of overprotecting its criminal sources. In 1985, federal prosecutors, unaware that the Teamsters boss Jackie Presser was a top-echelon F.B.I. informant, sought an indictment against him for putting two ghost employees on the payroll. The following year, three Cleveland F.B.I. agents were investigated for having blocked the indictment, allegedly by inventing an alibi for Presser. During an internal inquiry, one of those agents, Robert Friedrick, admitted to his role in creating the phony alibi. His statement was ruled inadmissible, however, and obstruction charges against him were dismissed; the other agents were never charged.

The F.B.I. had helped keep Presser on the street, but Presser, unlike Greg Scarpa, had never shown a penchant for violence. Scarpa had other qualities that made him a dangerous choice for informant: he was shrewd, and he had a proven ability to bend people to his will. "Greg was a true Machiavelli," Louis Diamond, a former attorney of his, says. "He was the puppeteer. He lived to manipulate people against people." Diamond adds that Scarpa was "one of the better gin-rummy players," and that the game showed off his "brilliance" and "ability to focus and plan." For thirty years, he adds, "Greg was able to keep the government on the schneider"—a cardplayer's term for preventing your opponent from scoring a point.

Scarpa was first officially opened by the F.B.I. on March 20, 1962, reputedly after agents seized him outside New York State for an armed robbery. It is not hard to see how his long relationship with the Bureau worked to his benefit. According to an associate, he "hated doing time," and, unlike most Mob figures, he seemed never to go to jail. During his three decades as an informant, his only incarceration, at Rikers Island for bribing two policemen, was thirty days in 1978—one of the years in which he was closed by the F.B.I. He had previously been arrested for bookmaking, assault with a lead pipe (twice), hijacking a tractor-trailer loaded with J. & B. Scotch, possession of stolen mail, and interstate transportation of stolen bonds. In each instance, the charges were dismissed.

Scarpa's ability to stay out of jail did not go unnoticed by his Mob associates, and periodically there were rumors that he was a snitch. But everyone in the family knew that the government did not ally itself with killers, and, as one associate pointed out about Scarpa, "He was crazy. He killed a lot. He was nuts." Lou Diamond adds, "Greg was an absolutely fearless man who enjoyed killing, and enjoyed vengeance. And enjoyed the subtlety. He would smile at a guy, take him out to dinner, and blow his brains out." After Scarpa became sick, he proposed that someone get him a wheelchair and roll him into a roomful of enemies with a machine gun hidden under his blanket. His associates gave him nicknames: the Mad Hatter, the Grim Reaper, General Schwarzkopf.

By the start of the Colombo war, Scarpa had murdered no fewer than eight people, and probably many more. One of his victims, according to a government document, was a Manhattan doctor named Eli Sckolnick. In the late seventies, Sckolnick lost his license to practice medicine and transferred title to a lucrative abortion clinic to a nurse who was on intimate terms with Scarpa. In the early eighties, Scarpa put a stop to Sckolnick's demands for money from the clinic by obtaining his address in Forest Hills and killing him. In 1984, it is alleged, Mary Bari, a young woman who was thought to know the whereabouts of a Colombo fugitive, was lured to a bar on the pretext of a job offer, was shot by Scarpa, and was tossed, dead, into the trunk of a car.

Scarpa was born in Brooklyn on May 28, 1928. He appears to have been drawn into the Colombo family—then called the Profaci family—by his older brother, Salvatore, who died in a shooting in 1987. In the early fifties, Scarpa married Connie Forrest; they had one daughter and three sons, including Gregory, Jr., who followed his father into the Mafia. By the time Scarpa separated from his wife, around

1973, he had had another son with a longtime girlfriend, Linda Schiro. Meanwhile, though he continued to live with Schiro, and had never divorced Forrest, he married Lili Dajani, a Palestinian-Israeli beauty queen, in 1975, in Las Vegas. Around 1978, Schiro began seeing a delivery boy named Larry Mazza; Scarpa permitted their love affair to continue, and, in the meantime, he inducted Mazza into his crew.

A number of crewmen answered to Scarpa's authority, but DeVecchio says that Scarpa never assumed the formal title of captain. He was what mafiosi call "a good earner." His income came from loan-sharking, bookmaking, the sale of marijuana and cocaine, securities and credit-card fraud, operating an auto-theft ring, and other forms of larceny. Simultaneously, he received money from the government: two hundred and fifty-three dollars a month in Social Security, and a total of at least a hundred and fifty thousand dollars in untaxed income—informant fees—from the F.B.I.

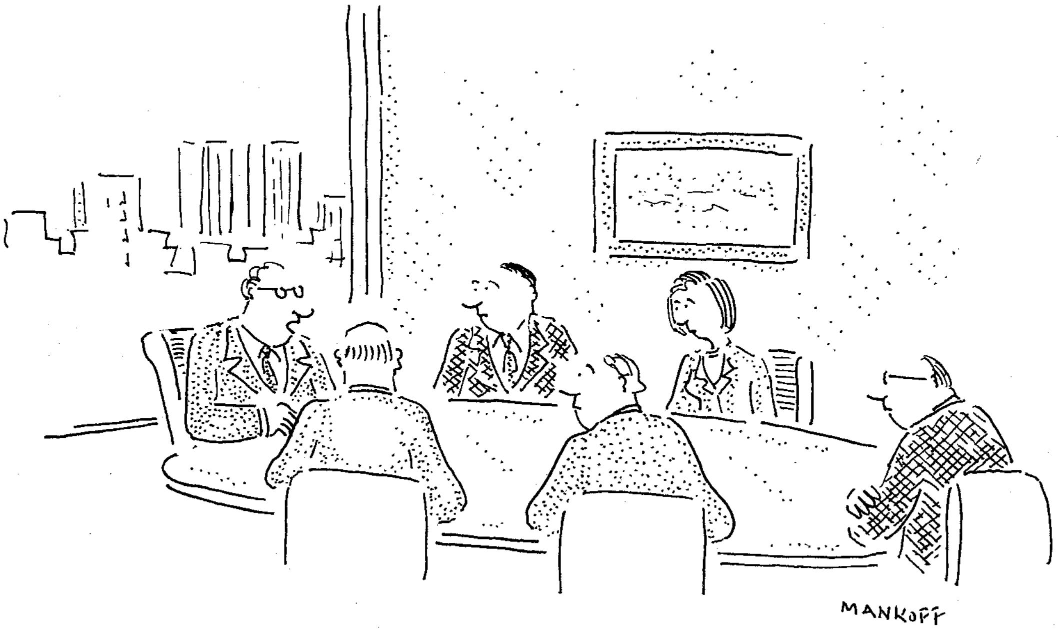
His early use by the Bureau went far beyond informant, and may have persuaded him that his violence—at least, when it was directed toward other bad guys—had the government's tacit approval. In the sixties, J. Edgar Hoover was criticized for the Bureau's failure to protect the civil rights of blacks in the Deep South. Consequently, the F.B.I. resorted to extreme measures in its war on the Ku Klux Klan. On January 10, 1966, the day after Vernon Dahmer, a black farmer and merchant in Forrest County, Mississippi, agreed to make his grocery store available as a place for blacks to pay poll tax, Klansmen set his house on fire, fatally searing his lungs and badly burning his ten-year-old daughter. Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach promised to commit "the full resources of the Justice Department" to catching the perpetrators. On January 21st, the Jackson, Mississippi, office of the F.B.I. called the New York office and, as recorded in an internal memo, requested the use of informant NY-3461—Gregory Scarpa—for a special assignment.

One of the immediate suspects in the Dahmer homicide was Lawrence Byrd, the owner of Byrd's Radio & TV Service in Laurel, Mississippi, who held the post of senator in the Klan. One evening in late January, at around nine o'clock, as Byrd was about to close his shop, Scarpa and an F.B.I. agent agreed to buy a television from Byrd and asked him to help carry it to a car parked outside. Byrd was pistol-whipped, shoved into the back seat, forced to lie down, and driven, he believed, to Camp Shelby, a military base built on rural Mississippi swampland. There Scarpa beat a confession out of him. "Lawrence was a tough guy—a big, raw-boned country boy—but he was beat up so bad he was never the same after that," says W. O. (Chet) Dillard, the local district attorney, who visited Byrd in the hospital immediately after the kidnapping. Byrd implored Dillard not to investigate the matter, and in early March he signed a twenty-two-page confession prepared by the F.B.I., in which he inculpated himself and seven other Klansmen. He got ten years for arson, and died early last year, having never learned that his brutal interrogator was a New York mafioso.

LIN DEVECCHIO plainly has a fascination with mobsters, and during two interviews conducted for this account he made no attempt to hide it. He did not simply describe the wise guys he has known but mimicked them, down to their Brooklyn accents. He recalled a time when a fellow-agent introduced himself to an organized-crime figure stiffly, with a flash of his badge, "and the guy says to him, 'So whaddya want me to do—shit in my pants?' " DeVecchio laughed. His bad-guy imitations sometimes had an edge; at one point, he said he hoped that he would like this article, so that "I don't have to come looking for you some dark night."

DeVecchio spoke enthusiastically about how Mob figures had educated him to their way of looking at things. "It's a foreign culture to most of us," he said. "And you have to— 'Respect' is not the word, but you have to at least admire a guy who lives in an environment where every day he's looking over his shoulder. Scarpa used to tell me, 'I'd be called to meetings, and I'd leave my watch and valuables at home—I didn't know if I was coming back.' To survive in that milieu takes a special kind of person." After a pause, he added, "That doesn't mean Lin DeVecchio condones that way of life."

One thing that seemed to interest DeVecchio about organized-crime figures was their ability to kill in cold blood, and he went on, "I've asked a couple of wise guys about that, and they say the first couple of times it's hard but after that it's no big deal." He personally found that unfathomable, he said, but the mobsters taught him how "to talk, to act, as a true killer does"—a facility he used in undercover work. He created an alternative identity for himself—a hit man named Tony DeAngelo—and used it to good effect on a number of occasions. In 1983, a former C.I.A. agent, Edwin Wilson, in prison awaiting trial for illegally shipping



"And, while there's no reason yet to panic, I think it only prudent that we make preparations to panic."

weapons to Libya, was scouting for someone he could hire to murder two federal prosecutors and several potential witnesses. A fellow-inmate tipped off the authorities and then agreed to present DeVecchio to Wilson, in a visitors' room, as DeAngelo, the hit man. Days later, Wilson arranged for his son Erik to pay DeVecchio—unwittingly, it appeared—close to ten thousand dollars in a hotel men's room. Wilson was convicted of attempted murder.

DeVecchio, who is in his mid-fifties, is a husband and parent; he asked that no other details of his home life be disclosed. He spoke freely, however, about his late father, the Army colonel, who, as a finance officer, aided the Italian government in that country's postwar reconstruction. By the time DeVecchio was eighteen, he had lived in Italy, Japan, and Bermuda and in several American cities. He got an undergraduate degree in political science at George Washington University, and, in 1963, was about to accept a full commission in the military when the F.B.I. offered him a job as a clerk—an entrée into becoming an agent.

In March, 1966, having completed his agent training and passed an obligatory personal inspection by Hoover, DeVecchio was posted to upstate New York. He worked on routine crimes, such as bank robbery and car theft. In April, 1967, he was transferred to the New York City office, which was then on East Sixty-ninth Street; from that time forward, he specialized in organized crime. In less than a year, DeVecchio says, "I had my first informant under my belt." He also set about earning a master's degree in criminal justice from Long Island University.

DeVecchio found a kindred spirit and mentor on the organized-crime squad in Manhattan—an agent thirteen years his senior named Anthony Villano. "Tony had a very good way with wise guys," DeVecchio says. "I learned a lot of things by watching Tony." Villano, who died of heart failure in 1988, was an unorthodox agent—a tough Brooklynite, who once narrowly avoided arrest in a barroom brawl. He operated a number of informants, and one of them was Greg Scarpa. (DeVecchio says he learned this only after Villano quit the Bureau, in 1973.)

Villano left behind a blunt memoir of his F.B.I. career, written in 1977 with the author Gerald Astor and entitled "Brick Agent." (In Hoover's time, a street agent for the F.B.I. was said to be "on the bricks.") Astor says that two pseudonymous people in the book are actually Scarpa. The book recounts that Scarpa had had his first rift with the Bureau before Villano ever met him: he believed that the F.B.I. had welshed on a fifteen-hundred-dollar payment owed him for his work in the Deep South. Villano wrote that after finding Scarpa's name in the closed-informant file he got him the money but was unable to win his coöperation until he impressed the mobster, who was built like "an ox," by arm-wrestling him to a standoff.

Villano, who referred to developing a criminal informant as "getting married," came to regard Scarpa as "a friend," and repeatedly bent, or even broke, the law on his behalf. Often when Scarpa's information led to the recovery of stolen merchandise, Villano collected sizable reward money for him from insurance companies; and once, to make an illegal sports bet, Villano used Scarpa as his bookie. A more significant episode occurred when a criminal who could implicate Scarpa in acts of larceny offered to coöperate with the Bureau: Villano silenced the man by inventing the fiction that the Colombo family planned to kidnap his daughter if he talked. The man died in prison.

Although Scarpa tipped off the Bureau to a number of major heists, Villano wrote that all the time he himself worked with Scarpa "I had to reassure myself that our relationship was not the ultimate perversion of the whole law-enforcement idea. In my mind, what we did was justified on the grounds of the greatest good." Not everyone in the Bureau agreed. "I had a discussion with Tony that made me think that Scarpa thought he had a license to kill," one agent, now retired, recalls. "Around 1970, an informant for the Drug Enforcement Administration got blown away, and the D.E.A. heard that Scarpa was the triggerman. They wanted to interrogate Scarpa, and Tony did a tap dance to obstruct their investigation. Scarpa was not arrested or charged with that murder."

SCARPA was closed in 1975, two years after Villano left the Bureau. DeVecchio came across Scarpa's name in the closed-informant file, just as his ex-colleague had done, and in 1980 he got permission to try to reopen him. He says that he first called Villano for advice but can't now remember what he was told. One day that year, DeVecchio dressed casually, drove to Scarpa's residence, on Avenue J, in Brooklyn, and waited until Scarpa left the house alone. "I got out of the car and introduced myself," he recalls. "I said, 'I know you by reputation—you have a good reputation on the street.' I flattered him. I told him I worked the Colombo family, and I said, 'I'm not looking for anything now, but one of these days I could use your help.' " Scarpa provided a phone number. A few days later, the two men went for a drive, and Scarpa explained why he'd been closed: he had had a shouting match with the assistant director of the F.B.I.'s New York office over what he termed a broken promise. "Scarpa said the guy was not a gentleman," DeVecchio recalls. "I just played dumb."

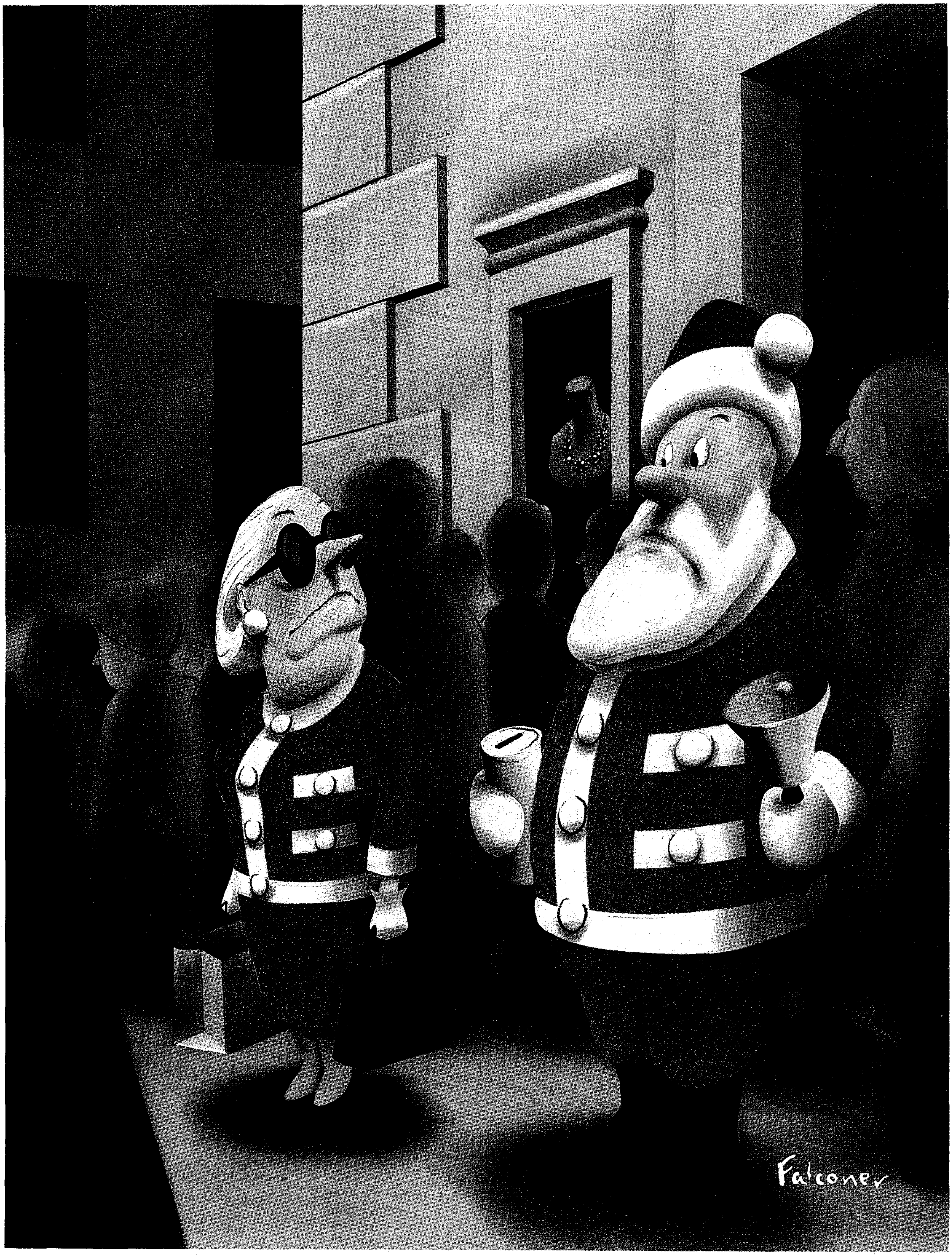
DeVecchio continued to meet with Scarpa for the next eleven and a half years. He acknowledges that he found Scarpa "very personable," and that he accepted a few small gifts from him—a bottle of wine, a pan of lasagna, and, in the early eighties, a Cabbage Patch doll for a friend's niece. "We got along," he says. He does not characterize Scarpa as having been a friend, however, nor does he distinguish him from the other top-echelon informants he worked with in the course of his career—five in all.

Although his squad had oversight of both the Colombo and the Bonanno families from the late eighties on, DeVecchio says he had no knowledge until 1992, after the Colombo war had ended, that Scarpa was a multiple murderer. But he does say, "The information we had for years and years on Scarpa was that he was a tough opponent on the street. He was a vicious, tough man. But, you know, when you talk to any organized-crime member you can almost take it to the bank that he's killed somebody."

DeVecchio says he never knew why Scarpa chose to coöperate with the F.B.I. "I think part of his motivation was he thought there was a quid pro quo—that I could be of some help to him sometime, one hand washing the other." He adds, "I think that's illusory." Earlier, he said, "A smart wise guy will talk to law enforcement in hopes—*in hopes*, not because it's gonna happen—that he'll derive some benefit from it. What does that mean? Does that mean a pass? He may think that. I'll tell you right now, I told Scarpa, as I did all my other T.E. informants, 'If you screw up, I'm not gonna help you out.' " The most he could ever do for an informant who'd been arrested, he says, was make his infor-

SKETCHBOOK BY IAN FALCONER

CHRISTMAS CHEER



mant status known to the prosecution and the judge.

In practical terms, however, this could amount to a pass. In 1985, the Secret Service, unaware that Scarpa was anything other than a mobster suspected of dealing in counterfeit credit cards, sent an undercover agent to his principal hangout, the Wimpy Boys Athletic Club, in Brooklyn, where the agent sold Scarpa three hundred blank MasterCard and Visa cards. Scarpa was indicted the following year by the Brooklyn Organized Crime Strike Force, and he agreed to plead guilty. In July, 1986, the strike force sent the judge a lengthy letter detailing Scarpa's criminal history and penchant for violence, and urged that he be jailed and fined substantially. Then, with the permission of F.B.I. officials in Washington, DeVecchio conferred with members of the strike force, and he and Scarpa met with the judge. Scarpa drew a ten-thousand-dollar fine and five years' probation.

In August, 1986, while Scarpa was awaiting the outcome of the credit-card case, he developed bleeding ulcers and was admitted to Victory Memorial Hospital, in Brooklyn. When medication failed to stop the bleeding, he was told he would need transfusions. Scarpa did not want any of the hospital's blood in his veins—in the words of one of his attorneys, "Greg could never be accused of being racially liberal"—and he asked Linda Schiro to round up as many friends and relatives as she could. By the next day, almost thirty people had come to the hospital, and blood from some of them was administered to Scarpa without having been screened for H.I.V. One of the donors—Paul Mele, a weight lifter who served on Scarpa's crew—had contracted the virus, apparently from a steroid needle; six months after donating his blood, he was dead.

After the transfusions, Scarpa was taken to the operating room at Victory Memorial for emergency ulcer surgery. He seemed fine for a day or two, but then came down with a high fever, and began drifting in and out of consciousness. Linda Schiro claimed that the resident surgeon who had performed the operation, a Filipino named Angelito Sebollena, insisted that everything was all right, but she was unnerved one day when she caught him shaving Scarpa's face, in order to, as the doctor put it, "make him look nice." She had Scarpa transferred to Mt. Sinai Hospital, in Manhattan. There his stomach, which was hemorrhaging beyond repair, was removed. Scarpa finally went home in October, with the aid of a walker.

Scarpa blamed Sebollena for making a faulty incision, and Victory Memorial for exposing him to AIDS. He filed suit. Before long, Sebollena was in further trouble. In 1991, he injected two male patients with the drug Versed, a central-nervous-system depressant that leaves a person conscious but immobile, and performed oral sex on them. Gary Pillersdorf, the lawyer who represented Scarpa at the medical-malpractice trial, in August, 1992, recalls that on the morning of the opening statements the judge motioned him to the bench and said, "Let me get this straight. You're representing a hit man with AIDS against a doctor who sodomizes his patients. Am I on the right page?"

Scarpa made a superb witness in his own behalf. Choking back tears, he testified that he was afraid now to kiss his grandchildren, and he said that living with AIDS was like being "a person that's condemned to death and, each time he walks the corridor to the execution, he gets a reprieve." A black woman on the jury—an elementary-school principal, whose husband worked for the Brooklyn D.A.'s office—began to cry; she later described Scarpa as "a noble man." Several jurors later said they had been prepared to award Scarpa millions of dollars, but by August 28th he was too exhausted to continue with the trial, and agreed to a settlement of three hundred thousand dollars. He wanted the money in twenty-four hours, however, and in cash. The next morning, he sent a bodyguard, in a nylon jogging suit and heavy jewelry, to a Manhattan Citibank branch to collect it. Pillersdorf says that bank employees were nonplussed when the man tossed the cash into a duffelbag without counting it, and were "wide-eyed" when he told them, "I know who you guys are, if there's a problem."

While Scarpa was recuperating at home after his surgery, the family consigliere, Carmine Sessa, dropped in on him several times. Once or twice, Sessa handed Scarpa the phone and told him the caller was somebody named Mr. Dello, and he remembered hearing Scarpa once tell Dello, "But I already brought you up to date on that." Sessa, who later turned coöperator, said he had always figured that Scarpa had a friend in law enforcement—someone who protected him. Sessa also believed that Scarpa had an information source in the government. During the Colombo war, some of Scarpa's crewmen heard him refer to a source he called The Girlfriend, who was under-

"Nothing for me, thanks."

stood to be a man—not a lover, certainly, but someone Scarpa trusted deeply. Whenever The Girlfriend paged Scarpa, even if Scarpa was in a car on the highway, he got to a phone as quickly as possible. Scarpa seemed to have inside information about the enemy faction during the war, including rebels' addresses, and he told his crewmen that The Girlfriend was a mole in the enemy camp. At least one of those crewmen, Joey Ambrosino, didn't believe it; he later told the authorities that there was no way any rebel would trust someone as "vicious" as Greg Scarpa.

A number of Scarpa's associates had concluded that he had a law-enforcement source as early as 1987, because that year he had inside information about a drug case. Around that time, he had joined his son Greg, Jr., and nine of Greg, Jr.,'s crewmen in a violent narcotics-and-extortion enterprise. Dealers who sold marijuana and other drugs in areas that Scarpa, Sr., considered to be his turf, which included, for example, the campus of the College of Staten Island, were required to make payoffs of as much as a thousand dollars a day or have their bones broken. With the help of a dealer who had been beaten with baseball bats, the Drug Enforcement Administration soon began to build a case against Greg, Jr., and his crew. The D.E.A. was unaware that Scarpa, Sr., was involved in the enterprise, but he knew all about the D.E.A. investigation. One day that summer, Greg, Jr., showed some of his crewmen a piece of paper that he had got from his father, which listed ten people, including Greg, Jr., who had been targeted for arrest. He said the list had been supplied by "a friend" of his father's, whom he also described as "an agent."

Scarpa, Sr., ordered that no one but Greg, Jr., attempt to flee—it is believed that he wanted to learn how strong a case the government had against his son—and the nine crewmen were arrested on November 12, 1987. Greg, Jr., could not be found. Valerie Caproni, the Brooklyn federal prosecutor handling the case, was angry. "This was going to be a big, expensive case to try, and our top defendant was in the wind," she recalls. He was not caught until August, 1988, after being featured on the television program "America's Most Wanted," by which time Caproni had convicted the nine crewmen. Though she subsequently convicted Greg, Jr., and he got twenty years, she complains that it was "not a lot of fun" to have to mount a second trial.

"I think older women with younger men threatens all the right people."

Caproni, a Southerner with a reputation for toughness, has since risen to chief of the criminal division of the Brooklyn United States Attorney's Office. In early 1994, she learned from two of the convicted crewmen, who had become coöperating witnesses, that in 1987 Greg, Jr., had obtained a list of all her defendants. She plainly suspects Lindley DeVecchio; in a court document she states that there is "some reason to believe" he leaked the list. DeVecchio vehemently denies doing so, but Caproni recalls that in the summer of 1987, while the D.E.A. case was being developed, she invited an F.B.I. agent named Michael Tabman to a planning meeting, and that Tabman took notes. Tabman later recalled, in a sworn statement, that sometime after the meeting he'd told DeVecchio about the D.E.A. case, and found him "very interested in this matter."

Caproni also finds some reason to believe that DeVecchio leaked another piece of confidential information to Scarpa in 1987—information that nearly got a man killed. She recalls saying at the summer meeting in Tabman's presence that one of the crewmen she planned to indict, Cosmo Catanzano, was "a weak link," who might coöperate if he was arrested. Tabman says he doesn't remember this. That same summer, Greg, Jr., informed one of his crewmen (who later coöperated with federal authorities) that his father's "agent source" had warned that Catanzano was "going to rat." Sometime after that, Scarpa, Sr., ordered that Catanzano be murdered and buried—and quickly, because the D.E.A. arrests were imminent. Two crewmen dug a grave for Catanzano in a secluded spot off the Arthur Kill Road, in Staten Island, but Catanzano's execution was foiled by his arrest. He never did coöperate. DeVecchio denies ever mentioning Catanzano to Scarpa.

CAPRONI would not say anything about DeVecchio in an interview, but she lavishly praised an agent named Christopher Favo, who had worked under him, and who became DeVecchio's most vocal accuser. Favo, an attorney and

"Sipsies?"

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a graduate of Notre Dame, joined the Bureau in 1983. "I think Chris Favo is an excellent agent," Caproni said. "He's an extremely hard worker. He's very bright. I have used him as a witness in a couple of cases, and find him to be easy to prepare. He has a good memory." During the Colombo war, Favo was, among other things, an information liaison between the F.B.I. and New York City police officers, who found him rather straitlaced—"like a young seminarian," one recalls. But that was all right: the cops had been given the job of trying to suppress the war by arresting people for carrying guns, and they believed that Favo could be trusted. The standard criticism of Favo was that he worked too hard—he seemed never to go home—and that he wanted to do everything himself and would not delegate responsibility.

DeVecchio doesn't share Caproni's high opinion of Favo. "Suffice it to say, he's not a favorite of mine," he says. "Everything's black-and-white for Chris Favo. If you were crossing the street and missed the crosswalk by a foot, he'd give you a ticket for jaywalking. And he's an egomaniac of the worst kind."

It was Favo who eventually reported DeVecchio to the Bureau. Though Favo was joined by three other agents when he voiced his suspicions, DeVecchio says those agents were "duped" by Favo. They all misinterpreted his actions, he says, because they all lacked street experience, and had "no clue" to what it took to operate a top-echelon source. "Favo used to say, 'I've got a lot of experience with coöperating witnesses,' " DeVecchio says. "So what? Anybody can make a deal with some guy who doesn't want to go to jail for the rest of his life. He never worked in the street covertly and developed an informant."

Favo's thoughts and actions during the Colombo war have been preserved in testimony, affidavits, memorandums, and a daily diary. He was the senior field agent investigating the war, and was one of the first agents on the scene on November 18, 1991, when its opening shots were fired—at Greg Scarpa.

Scarpa had been predicting a shooting war for some time—ever since it became apparent that the family's acting boss, Victor Orena, Sr., was trying to depose the jailed Carmine Persico and take over the family. From Scarpa, and from Scarpa's girlfriend's daughter, who was also named Linda, Favo learned what had happened. Scarpa was pulling out of his driveway in his car, and Linda, with her infant son, was pulling out in another car, when a van and a panel truck blocked their way. A group of men in ski masks jumped out of the van and opened fire with automatic weapons, leaving a row of bullet holes in the fender of Linda's car. Scarpa escaped by driving up onto the sidewalk, past the panel truck. (He later groused that for the gunmen to have even risked hitting Linda and her son showed that discipline was falling apart in the Mafia.) Favo took down the plate number of the truck, which had been left behind, and traced it to a rental office in Queens. He says he provided that information to DeVecchio, whom he had not yet begun to suspect of leaking information to Scarpa. He says he didn't learn until after the war, from a coöperator, that someone had told Scarpa where the truck had been rented.

Scarpa believed that the gunmen had been sent by William (Wild Bill) Cutolo, then reputedly the acting underboss. Scarpa made plans to disguise himself as a Hasidic Jew and mow down Wild Bill as he left his girlfriend's house on Thanksgiving Day, 1991, but that morning an article in the *Post* mentioned the snitch rumor about Scarpa, and he was forced to call off the hit so that he could assuage his confederates. Between December 3rd and January 7th, Scarpa did kill two other rebels, wounded a third, and accidentally shot and killed a Genovese family associate, who was blamed for his own death, because he was at a Colombo hangout at the time. There was no more talk of Scarpa being a snitch.

In a 1995 sworn statement DeVecchio denied ever deliberately leaking intelligence to Scarpa, but he said it was possible that Scarpa had inferred information from his questions, adding, "You cannot debrief a top-echelon source in a vacuum." Though the entire record is not available, it appears that much of the information that Scarpa was giving back during the war was worse than useless. F.B.I. documents show that he repeatedly pinned his wartime violence on other people; they also show that DeVecchio conferred with Scarpa on the very day Scarpa committed one of his murders.

As the war escalated, DeVecchio found it difficult to reach Scarpa by phone, and one time he dropped by Scarpa's house. Whenever DeVecchio met with an informant at home, he brought along one or two other agents, to make the visit look like an intrusion. He did not let his subordinates participate in the debriefing with Scarpa, however; he sat them down in Scarpa's living room, with the television turned on, while he spoke privately with his informant in the kitchen for about an hour.

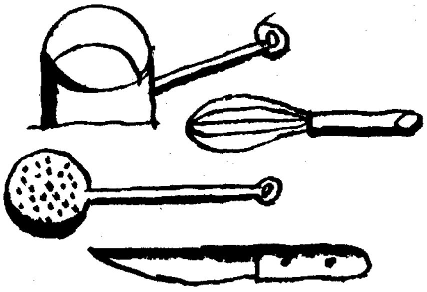
Some of Scarpa's men later told federal authorities that during the war Scarpa was paged frequently by The Girlfriend. He was warned to be careful, and to watch out in particular for a rebel nicknamed Joe Waverly. In January, 1992, Scarpa and Waverly had a gunfight from adjacent cars, two feet apart, near Avenue U. Waverly shot out Scarpa's window, and Scarpa, whose Tec-9 had misfired, sped off with glass fragments in his hair. On February 26th, out on Avenue U, Scarpa shot Waverly in the stomach.

The following day, Favo appears to have formed his first suspicions about DeVecchio. That morning, a loan shark named Carmine Imbriale was arrested by the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office, and he told the authorities that he'd been at a dinner the evening before at which Scarpa had proposed a toast and bragged about shooting Waverly. The D.A.'s office alerted Favo, and he conveyed the news to DeVecchio. Favo says that DeVecchio then got a phone call from Scarpa, and told Scarpa that the Brooklyn D.A.'s office had Imbriale in temporary custody, adding, "I don't know what he's saying about you." Favo was concerned that DeVecchio had just endangered Imbriale's life. And, in fact, that evening, according to a coöperator, Scarpa said, "It would be a good idea to kill Imbriale." Favo claims that he persuaded DeVecchio to call Scarpa the next day and warn him that if any harm came to Imbriale he would be held suspect. DeVecchio says that neither phone conversation with Scarpa about Imbriale took place, and that he has "no idea" why Favo would invent such a story.

A report that Scarpa had boasted about shooting someone was not sufficient evidence to arrest him, but it should have been cause, according to the Department of Justice guidelines on F.B.I. informants, to consider closing him. DeVecchio did not seem inclined to do so. Around the same time, however, DeVecchio's immediate supervisor, Donald North, to whom all the Mafia squads reported, became uneasy about Scarpa. North had been told by an agent not on DeVecchio's squad that Scarpa was conspiring to murder someone. (The intended victim's identity has not been revealed.) North has testified that he asked DeVecchio if he had reason to believe that Scarpa was committing crimes of violence. "He was adamant," North recalled. "He was convinced that Mr. Scarpa was not engaged in any violent activity." Nevertheless, North checked on the information about the murder conspiracy and found it credible, so, as of March 3, 1992, Scarpa was ordered closed, and DeVecchio was told to have no further contact with him. A month later, F.B.I. headquarters permitted DeVecchio to reopen Scarpa, after he attributed the murder-conspiracy charge against Scarpa to the "paranoia" among Colombo-family members which had been engendered by the war.

On May 22nd, Scarpa killed again. At about three-thirty in the morning, as the rebel soldier Larry Lampesi was locking the gate of his apartment building, Scarpa shot him with a rifle extended from his car window, then got out of the car with two of his crewmen and pumped some extra rounds into his body. The same morning, another Colombo rebel was wounded in a second incident.

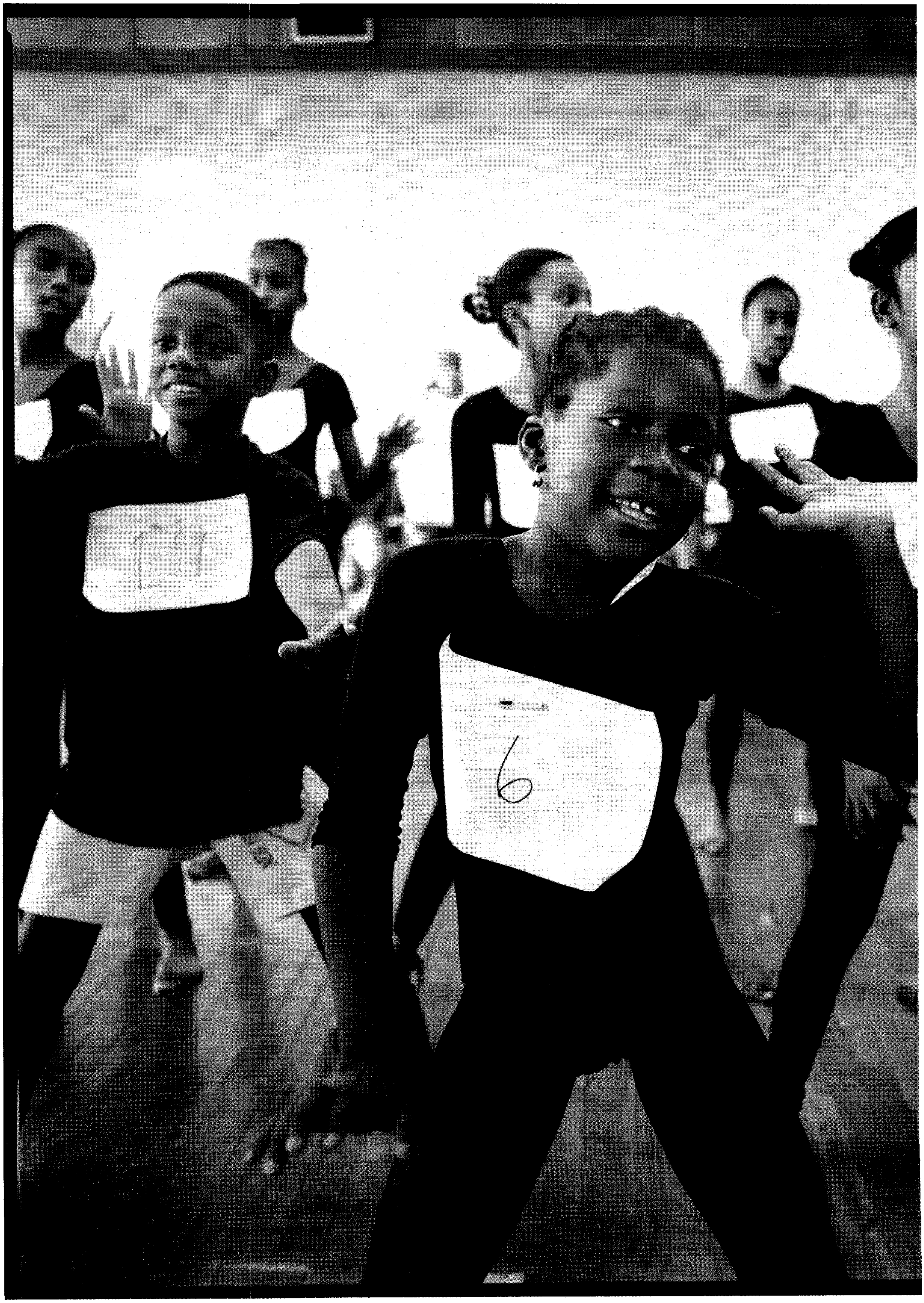
A few hours later, Favo says he stopped by DeVecchio's office to report the two shootings. Twice in court, in the past two years, Favo has given a dramatic account of how he says DeVecchio reacted to the news. Favo said he and his fellow-agents believed that "every time there was a shooting or a murder it was a defeat for us"; but DeVecchio "laughed" and "got excited" at the report, and, with his open palm, slapped his desk and said, "We're going to win this thing!" Favo said DeVecchio "seemed to be a cheerleader for the Persico faction," and also testified, "A line had been blurred. . . . He was compromised. He had lost track of who he was." DeVecchio has acknowledged making "some statement to that effect," but thinks it was in front of "probably half a dozen agents," and that he obviously meant the F.B.I. was going to win in its efforts to fight organized crime. He adds, "If I'm siding with an organized-crime family, why would I tell that to my agents? What person in their right mind would do that?"



By late spring, the war was winding down. A number of the rebels had been arrested, including the faction leader, Victor Orena. In June, agents on DeVecchio's squad placed a microphone in a car belonging to Scarpa's crewman Joey Ambrosino, a Persico-faction member. DeVecchio says he approved of the electronic surveillance—bolstering his contention that he was not playing sides in the war—though there is an odd passage in his sworn statement concerning its use. He wrote that "Scarpa, Sr., was astounded to learn that Ambrosino's car had been 'bugged' and that I had not told him of this situation." One is left to wonder why Scarpa would ever have expected to be told.

The bug was a productive one, and DeVecchio's agents began making arrests, starting with Ambrosino, who immediately elected to coöperate, and who connected Scarpa to at least one killing. Still, DeVecchio made no move to close Scarpa. "I saw this to be a dilemma," one of DeVecchio's agents later said, in a sworn statement. "I know if this was my source, I would have gone to the U.S. Attorney's to obtain a warrant for his arrest." Chris Favo had a plan to do exactly that: he asked a Brooklyn prosecutor if he could write up a murder-conspiracy complaint against Scarpa as soon as Favo gave the signal. He kept his plan a secret from DeVecchio. He has testified that by then "I believed that he was liable to say anything to Gregory Scarpa."

Meanwhile, the squad continued to make other arrests—so rapidly, in some cases, that DeVecchio was not notified in advance. In late June, agents arrested four Colombo suspects at an apartment in Point Pleasant, New Jersey. When the agents next saw DeVecchio, he was visibly agitated. One of them, Howard Leadbetter, a former Army officer who had worked in Special Operations, said in a sworn statement that he heard DeVecchio, "in a very forceful tone of voice," tell Favo, " 'I've had it! You will not arrest another single individual without my specific approval!' " Leadbetter testified in court that he could not understand DeVecchio's agitation until sometime later, when he learned that Scarpa had been at the New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Jersey apartment earlier that day and had narrowly avoided being arrested himself.

On the morning of August 31st, Favo dropped by DeVecchio's office, and told him that Scarpa was about to turn himself in to New York City police detectives on a gun charge. During the month that Scarpa had been closed by the F.B.I., he'd been seen tossing a loaded automatic from the window of his car. DeVecchio knew all about the gun arrest and, according to Favo, seemed unconcerned: it had been agreed beforehand that Scarpa would be arraigned and released. Only three days earlier, Scarpa had settled his medical-malpractice case, and had told a *Newsday* reporter that he was planning to celebrate with a vacation in Florida. Favo then sprang his surprise: he informed DeVecchio that immediately after the gun arraignment Scarpa was going to be arrested by two of DeVecchio's own agents and booked on federal murder-conspiracy charges. "DeVecchio was visibly upset" by that news, Favo says, and tried to alert Scarpa via the confidential hello line, but it was too late.

EVEN then, DeVecchio did not abandon his top-echelon source. He got in touch with prosecutors at the Brooklyn United States Attorney's Office to ask them to request bail for Scarpa. One prosecutor, Andrew Weissmann, later said he was "incredulous" that any agent would want Scarpa on the street, and, at a September bail hearing, before the federal magistrate John L. Caden, Weissmann argued vigorously for detention. Caden was not aware that Scarpa was an informant, and the attorney representing Scarpa at the hearing, Joseph Benfante, says he wasn't aware of it, either. "That would be tantamount to me thinking that Mother Teresa is assisting Saddam Hussein, because no F.B.I. informant goes out and engages in a Colombo war—it's insanity," Benfante says.

Benfante's motion for bail was made strictly on the ground of Scarpa's medical condition. By now, Scarpa had full-blown AIDS, with a T-cell count of zero (two thousand is normal), and at his malpractice trial in August his doctor had testified that he had between two and six months to live. Benfante says that Scarpa had also begun to show signs of AIDS dementia. During visits he paid to Scarpa in prison, he recalls, "He told me to make a list—he wants to give all the guards attaché cases, special cases of wine, and filet-mignon steaks. I told him, 'Greg, you can't have a steak in prison.' 'What do you mean!' He'd throw the chair. The next day, he'd be fine."

Judge Caden agreed to house arrest, with the stipulation that Scarpa wear an electronic anklet that would alert police if he left the house. All went well until December 29, 1992, when Scarpa's son by Linda Schiro, Joseph, got into a dispute over a drug transaction, and was said to have told his father that he had been spoken to disrespectfully. Scarpa rushed out of the house armed, went around the block, and got into a gun battle with two Bay Ridge drug dealers, one of whom he is believed to have killed. In the altercation, Scarpa's left eye was shot out. He is said to have walked back home, pressed a towel to his bleeding eye socket, drunk a glass of Scotch, and—because Schiro was hysterical—driven himself to Mt. Sinai Hospital. Joseph has since been killed in what was apparently a drug-related shooting.

Scarpa's house arrest was revoked. It was agreed that he would be sent to Rikers Island, a prison known for its superior AIDS facility, to serve a year on his gun charge. It seemed inconceivable that a man with a zero-T-cell count and no stomach, who had just had an eye shot out, would live anywhere near that long. The following spring, however, Scarpa was still alive, and on May 6, 1993, he appeared before federal Judge Jack B. Weinstein to plead guilty to three murders and conspiracy to murder several others.

Then, in October, at a meeting with prosecutors at the Brooklyn United States Attorney's Office, Scarpa offered, unsuccessfully, to become a coöperating witness for the government. He had asked his

NUTCRACKER SWING

Children audition for "The Harlem Nutcracker," the choreographer Donald Byrd's uptown remake of the Christmas ballet, based on Duke Ellington's arrangement of the Tchaikovsky score. In Byrd's version, the Sugar Plum Fairy's Kingdom of Sweets becomes Club Sweets, where swanky couples dance to big-band music. The production swings into the Brooklyn Academy of Music this week (December 11th through December 15th).

Photograph by Ulrike Schamoni

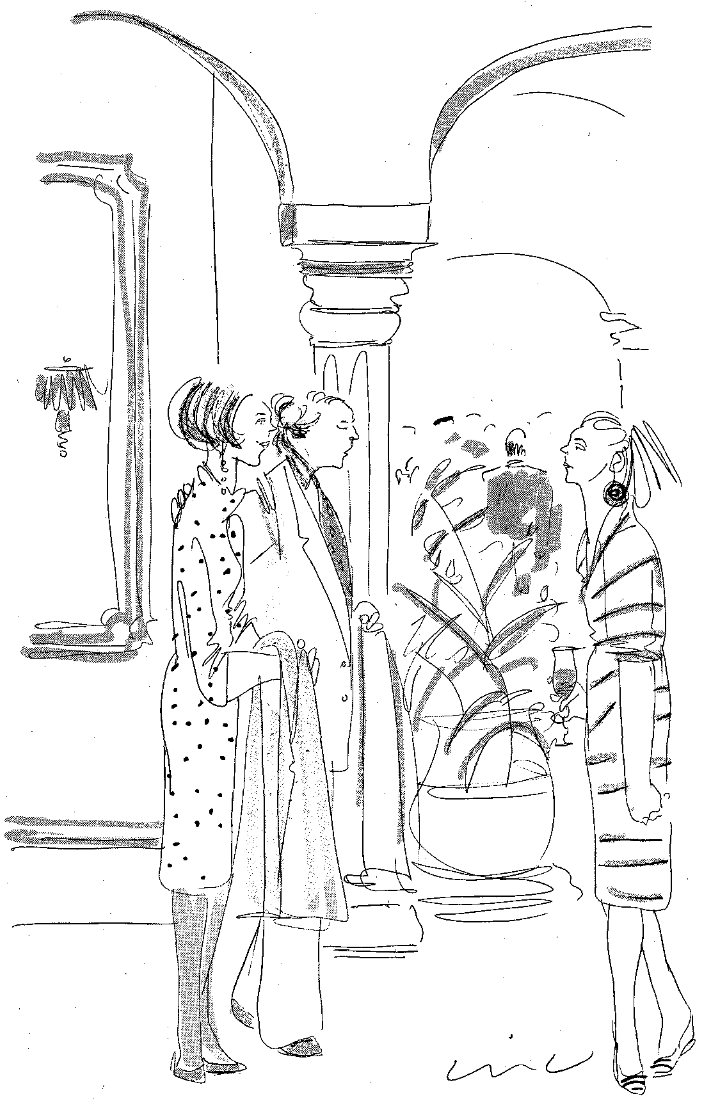
new attorney, a former prosecutor named Steven Kartagener, to make sure that DeVecchio attended. Kartagener recalls that at one point "Greg says, 'I've always been helpful to the government in the past—isn't that right, Mr. DeVecchio?' " and goes on to recount, "I assumed DeVecchio would say, 'What are you talking about? Stop being an asshole.' Instead, he says, 'Yes, that's true.' My jaw did a bounce off the tabletop." Two prosecutors recall hearing DeVecchio tell Favo at an earlier meeting that if there were "an O.P.R."—an Office of Professional Responsibility inquiry—into DeVecchio's handling of Scarpa "I'll have your ass."

Scarpa's sentencing for murder and murder conspiracy took place on December 15, 1993. Judge Weinstein asked Scarpa if he had anything to say, and was told no, "other than I expect to go home."

"You're not going to go home," Weinstein said. "You're going to go to prison."

"I tried to help, Your Honor," Scarpa said. "But it just didn't work out."

During Scarpa's final days in prison, his AIDS dementia took hold, and he was given to rambling. Occasionally, he spoke of the dirty work he claimed to have done for the government. He told one visitor how, after kidnapping a Mississippi man for the F.B.I., "he placed a gun in the guy's mouth, and started cutting his dick off with a razor" and demanded that the man tell him the location of "three kids that were missing"—lending credence to a report, first published in the *Daily News*, that Scarpa had led the F.B.I. to the buried bodies of the civil-rights workers Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney, slain in Philadelphia, Mississippi, in 1964. He also spoke about a secret assignment in Costa Rica for the United States government in the sixties that involved murder. On June 8, 1994, Scarpa died, of complications from AIDS, at the Federal Medical Center in Rochester, Minnesota.



"Really, thanks a lot. It's the best party we've been to all night."

For a year and half after the Colombo war ended, Chris Favo kept quiet about DeVecchio. He says he was worried that if he accused a well-respected veteran like DeVecchio of leaking confidential information the F.B.I. brass "would take it about as well as I would take it if somebody came up to me and said my wife was unfaithful." By January, 1994, however, Favo and three agents on his squad felt compelled to come forward. Several of Scarpa's crewmen had begun to coöperate, and their accounts of Scarpa and his alleged law-enforcement source were disturbing. Most disturbing, Favo says, was that during the Colombo war he had given DeVecchio a partial address for the hideout of the rebel leader, Victor Orena, and a physical description—a white, two-family house, with aluminum siding—and an incorrect address for one of Orena's men. Now it appeared from statements made by a coöperator that Scarpa's crew had tried unsuccessfully to locate and kill those two rebels after Scarpa supplied them with the identical information.

Favo's diary records what happened when he and the three other agents—Raymond Andjich, Howard Leadbetter, and Jeffrey Tomlinson—came forward that month to voice their concerns to officials at the New York office. At first they were commended for taking action, and assured of confidentiality, but only two weeks later, Favo wrote in his diary, an F.B.I. official carelessly exposed him and Leadbetter as whistle-blowers; when he complained, he says, the official told him that he personally believed in DeVecchio's innocence, and that "we will have to live with the problems." A few days after that, Favo wrote, DeVecchio called a squad meeting, at which he angrily denied the charges and added that "anyone that did not believe him could go f— themselves." Before long, Favo had concluded that blowing the whistle on DeVecchio "was a mistake that would follow us for our careers."

By March, 1994, an internal O.P.R. investigation of DeVecchio was under way. He was eventually moved out of organized crime and into drug enforcement, and, in the meantime, his investigation was transferred from the Bureau to the Public Integrity Section of the Department of Justice. The investigation proceeded slowly, and was kept quiet, even as alleged participants in the Colombo war continued to go to trial for murder and assault.

It was not until the summer of 1994 that, largely through the efforts of the New York attorney Alan Futerfas and his associate, Ellen Resnick, the investigation came to light. Futerfas and Resnick had been retained by a number of defendants accused of participation in the Colombo war. They immediately recognized the DeVecchio controversy as a gold mine for the defense, and they used it to formulate what might be called the "comrades in arms" theory of the war. According to this theory, the F.B.I. had deliberately fed Scarpa information, to help foment the war, and to make certain that he would emerge victorious. Futerfas argues that when DeVecchio allegedly declared, "We're going to win this thing," he was expressing the hope that Scarpa would end up as a boss when it was all over, with a seat on the Mafia's ruling commission.

The comrades-in-arms theory, whatever its merits, has been an unqualified success with juries. There have been nine trials stemming from the Colombo war, and at two of them the judges have permitted evidence of DeVecchio's relationship with Scarpa to be introduced. At both trials, every defendant—fourteen in all, including Wild Bill Cutolo—was acquitted of all charges. At the conclusion of one trial, a juror told the *Daily News*, "If the F.B.I.'s like this, society is really in trouble." Some people who were convicted before the DeVecchio controversy became known have made motions for new trials. It was at a hearing on one such motion last May that DeVecchio took the Fifth.

Despite its interest in winning convictions, the Brooklyn United States Attorney's Office has done nothing to make DeVecchio look good; the government has even conceded that DeVecchio "may have" disclosed confidential information to Scarpa, including, as Favo had charged, the whereabouts of people Scarpa was looking for. Douglas Grover, the lawyer for DeVecchio, blames the "rape" of his client by the Brooklyn United States Attorney's Office on Valerie Caproni, the head of the criminal division. He says that she continues to bear a grudge against DeVecchio in the mistaken belief that he leaked word of her 1987 drug indictment, causing Greg Scarpa, Jr., to flee. "A government prosecutor should be defending the government's actions, but Valerie wanted to get Lin," Grover says. Caproni disputes this. "I don't know what Mr. Grover would have had us do, given that evidence," she says.

Grover nevertheless had been predicting since earlier this year that DeVecchio would be cleared. And on September 4, 1996, after two and a half years, the O.P.R. investigation ended abruptly with a two-sentence letter stating that prosecution of DeVecchio was "not warranted."

DeVecchio has continued to invoke his Fifth Amendment privilege, however, and the controversy may not be over. Scarpa's relationship with the F.B.I. may be an issue at the upcoming trial of Gregory Scarpa, Jr., who is still serving time on his drug case, and who was indicted last year for acts of racketeering, including murder. He disputes DeVecchio's claim that DeVecchio never leaked information. Greg, Jr.,'s defense is expected to be that his alleged crimes actually were committed by his late father, and that the government is trying to pin them on Greg, Jr., to cover up its corrupt relationship with Scarpa, Sr. Through his attorney, Larry Silverman, Greg, Jr., claims to have known firsthand that DeVecchio was his father's law-enforcement source and that he was the person known as The Girlfriend. He may even attempt to sell these allegations directly to the jury by taking the stand. Silverman has told the court that he would like to call DeVecchio.

The Bureau continues to maintain its silence, and many questions about the DeVecchio matter remain unanswered. Though the F.B.I.'s long relationship with Scarpa appears to have shocked jurors, who found it sordid, it came as less of a surprise to people in other branches of law enforcement. They have long viewed the F.B.I. as an institution with its own agenda, obsessed with making successful cases even at the expense of upholding the law. There is nothing in the record to dispute DeVecchio's claim, echoed by his attorney, that "I didn't operate in a vacuum," and that key decisions concerning Scarpa, including the decision to reopen him during the war, were made with "the full knowledge of any number of people well above me in rank."

In October, Lin DeVecchio retired from the F.B.I., after thirty-three years of service. His retirement party was held at a seafood restaurant in lower Manhattan. About fifty well-wishers turned out. It was a crowd made up largely of F.B.I. retirees—"an old-timers' night," in the words of one guest—and, when speeches were made, the crowd got boisterous. The subject of DeVecchio's O.P.R. was far from taboo, and as one retirement gift was handed to him somebody yelled, "Lin—it's a subpoena!" There was never any question, however, that the crowd was in DeVecchio's corner, and near the end of the evening the last speaker, a retired agent, broke down in sobs, and declared, "Lin DeVecchio is not corrupt! Lin DeVecchio did what he believed was right!"

How the crowd felt about Christopher Favo was no secret, either. One speaker presented DeVecchio with an infectious-agent clothing kit, in case he should ever come in contact again with "the viral, infectious agent who started all this." James Kossler, a retired supervisor to whom DeVecchio had once reported, expressed his views about DeVecchio's accuser before the party: "The trouble with Chris Favo is that Chris Favo has a very high opinion of himself. He works sixteen hours a day, seven days a week, and you lose all objectivity when that happens. You see things you can't relate to or understand. This whole thing was a travesty, and Lin's reputation has been destroyed. Why wasn't Favo stopped? If I'd been there, I would have cut his nuts off."

Favo remains an F.B.I. agent, but recently he was transferred from New York to a regional office in the Midwest. The three other agents who reported DeVecchio to the Bureau continue to work in New York; one of them recently testified that Favo had "taken the brunt of a lot of this." Valerie Caproni says of Favo, "The fact that he's no longer working organized-crime cases in New York is to me just a horrible fallout of this whole thing," and adds, "It's been a very difficult situation, as it always is for a whistle-blower." Reached by phone recently, Favo said he'd be happy to comment on how he ended up in the Midwest, or answer any other question, pending permission from the F.B.I., which, as he guessed correctly, was denied. ♦

ANNALS OF TYCOONERY

THE LAST BUSINESS ECCENTRIC

Why there aren't any more C.E.O.s like Gulf & Western's Charles Bluhdorn.

BY MICHAEL KORDA

During the increasingly remote years of the sixties and seventies, the corporate "conglomerate" held the same fascination as bell-bottoms, Nehru jackets, white go-go boots, and Petula Clark singing "Downtown." These things bring back not so much nostalgia as a certain wonder that they ever held our attention; indeed, it is hard now to conjure up a time when the word "conglomerate" itself suggested to most people something new and threatening—a corporation whose only purpose was to maintain a dizzying rate of growth, and which did so by the constant acquisition of other companies. People feared that the companies they worked for would be acquired in an "unfriendly" takeover resembling the rape of the Sabine women: to most people outside Wall Street, conglomerates meant greed and long-distance management by strangers who didn't know a thing about your business. The word most often associated with them was "ruthless."

By reputation, Charles G. Bluhdorn was the most ruthless conglomerateur of them all, the so-called Mad Austrian. His violent temper, his many eccentricities, and his amazing volatility had made him a celebrity among a class of people who were rarely seen outside boardrooms or their own offices. His fellow-conglomerateurs preferred to remain invisible; they operated in stealth and were seldom quoted. Bluhdorn sought the limelight and apparently never shut up. It was therefore with a sense of dread that most of us who worked at Simon & Schuster in 1975 heard the rumor that he was "interested" in buying the company.

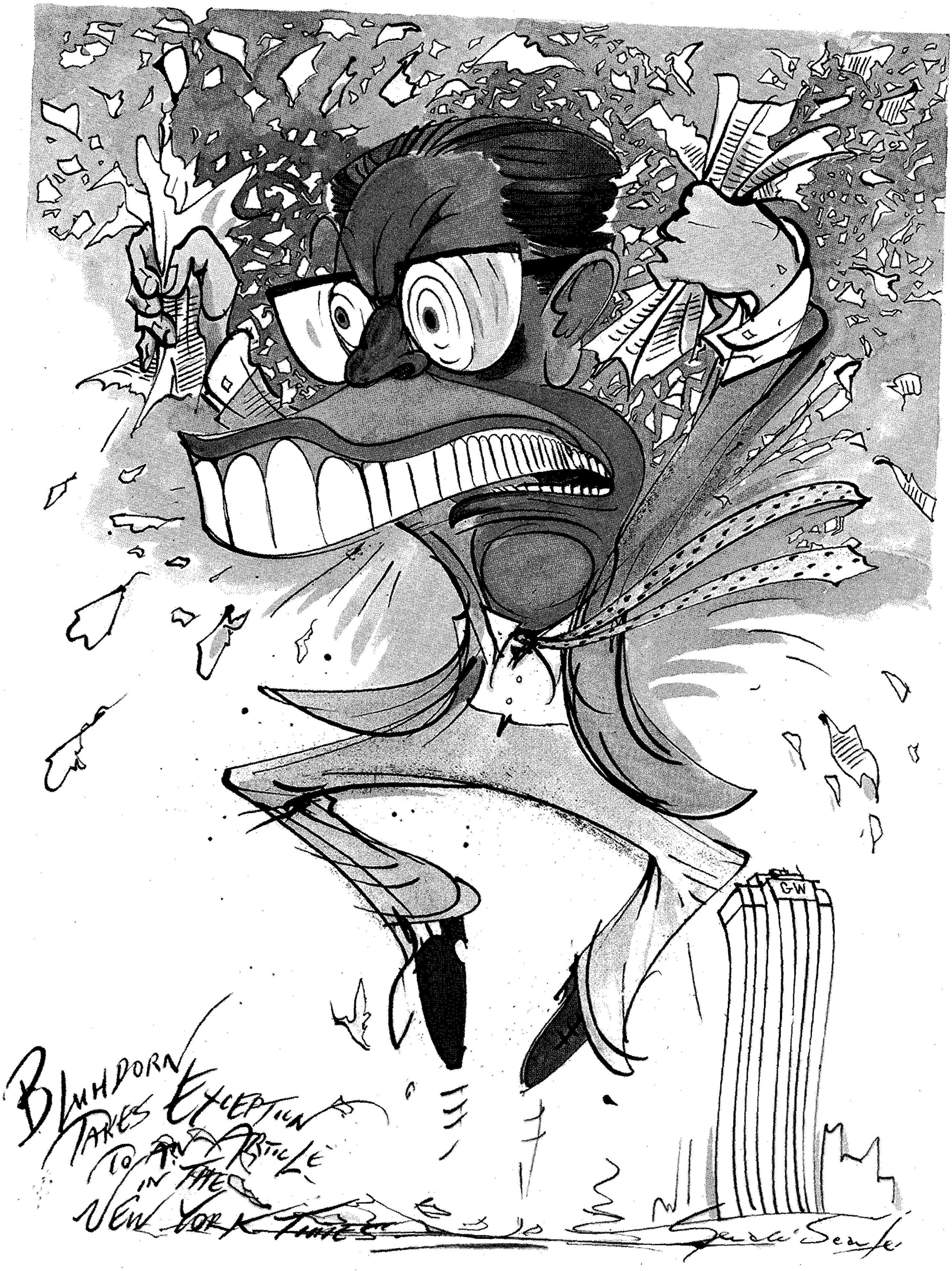
At the time, I was the editor-in-chief of S. & S., and I had never met Bluhdorn. Leon Shimkin, the co-founder of Pocket Books, who had once been the treasurer of S. & S. and had eventually bought out the two founders and merged the companies, was trying to sell S. & S., and my friend Dick Snyder, then the hard-charging head of the trade division, had managed to attract Bluhdorn's interest—no easy task, since Bluhdorn was known to have the attention span of a gnat. Shimkin was following in what had become a tradition in book publishing during the sixties: owners of major houses were suddenly dazzled by Wall Street, where, it appeared, there were actually people who would pay *millions* of dollars for companies that had been quietly lurching along for decades, publishing first novels and obscure works of art criticism and the occasional lucky best-seller. Why Shimkin felt the need to sell was something of a mystery, but then so was the fact that Alfred and Blanche Knopf had sold their beloved company to Bennett Cerf, and that Cerf then sold *his* company to the Radio Corporation of America, whose board of directors he held in contempt. For some reason, the owners of most of the major publishing houses seemed unwilling to pass the legacy on to their children, even though their sons had learned the business and appeared only too eager to come into their inheritance.

In a very short time, the deal was done: to the horror of older executives, many authors, and most of the outside world, S. & S. became a part of what was known as the Gulf & Western "family." Shimkin could hardly have got worse press among those who cared for culture and literature if he had sold the "Mona Lisa" for kindling. Bluhdorn was seen as the vandal at the gates, who would no doubt fire literary editors, put a stop to the purchase of first novels, and restrict the S. & S. list to vulgar best-sellers like Irving Wallace and Harold Robbins. Since I was the editor of both Wallace and Robbins, I didn't think I had anything to fear, but at some point in the negotiations Snyder took me aside and told me not to worry anyway. "Trust me," he said. "Nothing will change. We'll just make more money and get stock options, that's all."

At first, nothing did change. We did not quit our home in Rockefeller Center to be moved into G. & W.'s tower, on Columbus Circle, as had been rumored; nor were we told to stop buying first novels. Life went on much as before, except that Shimkin was swiftly replaced by Snyder. Some time went by before I met Bluhdorn, partly because Snyder was eager to protect what he regarded as my delicate sensibilities from Bluhdorn's temperament. Bluhdorn's ramshackle corporate empire was run like a feudal kingdom: the C.E.O.s of G. & W.'s many components were like medieval barons, with unlimited power in their own fiefs. When Bluhdorn needed to talk to one of them (or scream at him), he sent for him; he did not need to meet the underlings. However, perhaps because of my family name—Bluhdorn, having acquired Paramount Pictures on the cheap and turned it around, was fascinated by the movie business, and he knew that I was Alexander Korda's nephew—I was eventually invited to a pre-Christmas dinner in the G. & W. building.

Here, as we milled about for cocktails, I got my first real glimpse of the diversity of G. & W. I met executives from the industrial-valve business, the truck-leasing business, the mattress business, the headlight business, the zinc business—and shortly before dinner, Snyder managed to steer Bluhdorn himself through the crowd in my direction. I confronted an energetic man in his early fifties with a wild look in his eyes and the red complexion of someone whose blood pressure had to be off the scale. I tried to shake his hand, but he gave me a rib-crushing bear hug. "Dick tells me you're a goddam genius," he said. He spoke quickly, with a faint Germanic accent. I tried to deflect

GERALD SCARFE


G+W
Bluhdorn takes exception to an article in the New York Times
Gerald Scarfe

the compliment. "No, no!" Bluhdorn cried. "If he says it, it's *true*, God damn it to hell! I love geniuses! You're my boy!"

He let go of me and pinched my cheek, hard enough to bring tears to my eyes. I thought of Napoleon, who, it's said, would single out a veteran on parade by pinching his cheek. Bluhdorn was clearly a Napoleonic type: he had the same piercing eyes, the visible energy, and the absolute certainty that he was your master and you would do anything for him. He could radiate charm when he wanted to, and was an expert at telling people what they wished to hear and then doing the opposite. He had, in fact, persuaded Shimkin to sell S. & S. by offering him a place on the G. & W. board, only to pull the seat out from under him the moment his company had been bought—thus plunging him into well-heeled but gloomy retirement.

Also like Napoleon, Bluhdorn had the reputation of disliking anybody who was taller than he was, and indeed short people seemed to do better at G. & W. than tall people did, which I took as a good augury for Snyder and me, since we were both about the same height as Bluhdorn. At dinner, I was seated next to the tallest man in the room—Michael Burke, a former president of the New York Yankees, who had become the president of Madison Square Garden shortly after Bluhdorn bought a major stake in it. I knew Burke slightly—he was a fellow-equestrian, and he was what the Irish call "a lovely man." He was funny, brave (he had been a spy behind the German lines in Rome in 1944), and engagingly cynical about authority figures, including Bluhdorn, who suspected, correctly, that Burke made fun of him behind his back. Unfortunately for Bluhdorn, Burke was the darling of the New York press, so it was almost impossible to fire him.

Beside each place setting was a thin black box wrapped with a gold ribbon. We had been advised not to open our presents before Bluhdorn's speech, and the rumor was that each box contained a Christmas-bonus check. There was a certain queasiness in the air, partly caused by proximity to power—most of the executives around the table were from out of town, so they were like officials from the far corners of the Roman Empire who had been invited to dinner by the emperor and weren't sure whether the meal would end with dessert or their beheading—and partly because the G. & W. tower was notorious for swaying in a high wind, producing a sensation not unlike seasickness. If you looked at your glass closely enough, you could actually see the water moving.

As dessert was served, Bluhdorn rose to speak. His voice was high-pitched and rasping, and his way of encouraging the troops was to single them out one at a time to be "roasted." It was an amazing sight: some thirty middle-aged men in blue suits (there were almost no women present) with nervous smiles fixed on their faces as they waited to see whom Bluhdorn would pounce on next. The natural thing to do was pray that he would skip over you, but then being skipped over might mean that he didn't care about you, because he'd already decided to fire you. Burke sat through most of this remarkable performance with stony indifference—Bluhdorn apparently knew better than to give Burke the treatment—and then, clearly bored with the proceedings, he took the ribbon off his gift package and peeked inside. A smile came over his face as he pulled a pair of one-size-fits-all black stretch gloves out of the box: Bluhdorn had bought a clothing company that manufactured them. Burke pulled them on, then held up one black-gloved hand. A deadly hush fell over the room, and Bluhdorn stared at Burke suspiciously. "Yes?" he asked. "You have a question?"

Burke nodded cheerfully. "I just wanted to know which one of these guys I'm supposed to strangle," he said.

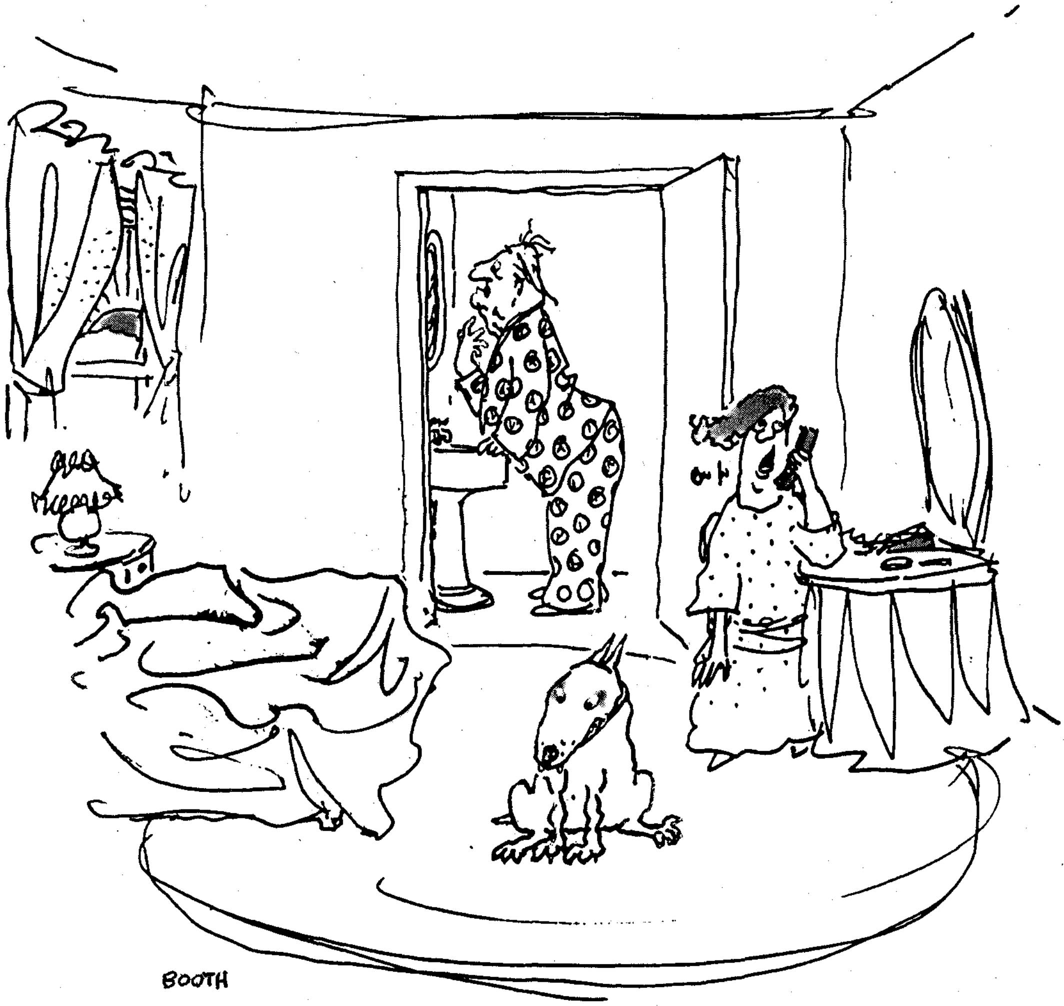
THE few facts that were available about Bluhdorn's life tended to contradict each other, but it seems certain that he was born in Vienna, in 1926, of middle-class Czech parents. His family apparently moved from Austria to England in 1936, and Bluhdorn was relocated to the United States as a refugee in 1942, which suggests that he was Jewish (his speech was laden with colloquial Yiddish insults like "putz," "schmuck," and "nebbish"). But Bluhdorn seemed to tread a careful line on the subject, allowing some people to believe he was Jewish and others not.

His business career was in the Horatio Alger tradition. He went to work for a cotton broker in New York at a salary of fifteen dollars a week, then switched to the commodities import-export business—a life long preoccupation with Bluhdorn, who was soon buying and selling sugar futures the way other men play golf. By the time he was twenty-one, he had cornered the market in malt: his trading was so hyperactive that it attracted the attention of the United States government, and brought about his first brush with Washington. At twenty-three, he was in business for himself, already a millionaire and something of a legend, but his epiphany came in 1956, when he bought Michigan Bumper. It was an unglamorous, low-rent corporation, whose stock (and industrial expertise) was at the bottom of the barrel, but Bluhdorn now learned that bankers were happy to lend him money to acquire another corporation. However decrepit Michigan Bumper might be, it *existed*, unlike most commodity deals. Somewhere in the wasteland of the industrial Midwest, there was a real-life, Dickensian factory, belching smoke and turning out rear bumpers for Studebaker—and bankers, Bluhdorn discovered, love bricks and mortar. He soon merged his new acquisition with the Beard & Stone Electric Company, of Houston, which was another unglamorous manufacturer of replacement auto parts.

Since Houston is near the Gulf of Mexico and Michigan is in the Midwest, the merged corporations became the Gulf & Western Company. (In the late seventies, the ampersand in the logo was replaced with a plus sign, as a symbol of the synergy that Bluhdorn sought but never achieved.) In 1960, Bluhdorn set out on a bank-financed spending spree that eventually turned G. & W. into a company that contained divisions devoted to manufacturing, communications, consumer products, agricultural products, natural resources, and financial services—a giant that ultimately included, among many other assets, New Jersey Zinc, Desilu Productions, Merson

Musical Products, the Consolidated Cigar Corporation, the Quebec Iron & Titanium Corporation, Madison Square Garden, the Furniture City Plating Company, Bonney Forge & Foundry, Rocket Jet Engineering, the Collyer Insulated Wire Company, and a substantial portion of the Dominican Republic.

Each acquisition opened up possibilities for another; each acquisition financed the next. It was a recipe for rapid growth not unlike a giant Ponzi scheme, and while it dazzled investors, it failed to enchant the major figures on Wall Street, who regarded Bluhdorn with deep skepticism. There was something about his demonic energy that set their teeth on edge. He remained an outsider and a renegade, and resented the fact bitterly.



"The wattle fairy came again last night."

• •

In 1966, however, Bluhdorn turned, in Wall Street's eyes, from a frog into a prince. Although Adolph Zukor, the founder of Paramount Pictures, was still alive, in his early nineties, and although the studio had once been Hollywood's greatest, the company had slipped far behind its rivals and was in danger of disintegrating. Bluhdorn, always quick to recognize a company in distress, snapped Paramount up.

There are many reasons that wealthy businessmen choose to go into the movie business. One is that it can be extremely profitable (of course, it is also possible to lose your shirt); a more potent reason is social. By the sixties, Bluhdorn was a rich man, but how many people want to invite the owner of New Jersey Zinc to dinner parties? Money is not everything, as Bluhdorn—like Marvin Davis and Rupert Murdoch after him—discovered. And despite the suspicion and hostility that Bluhdorn's acquisition of Paramount caused in Hollywood, where it is an axiom that no outsider can succeed, he was made for the movie business, and it for him. He loved taking risks; although he constantly fought with the people around him, he recognized talent when he saw it, and was willing to back it. He was totally involved in the process, and if he was a monumental pain in the ass, a full-time kibbitzer, and a tyrant, these were just the qualities that were by then lacking in most studios, and that the old studio heads—Louis B. Mayer, Harry Cohn, Darryl F. Zanuck, and Jack Warner, to name a few—had had in superabundance.

Bluhdorn's impatience, his boasting, his kinetic hyperactivity, and his prodigious chutzpah—that is, all the things that made him a distrusted figure on Wall Street and in the financial press—were assets in Tinseltown. For example, in a move that confounded everybody in the industry Bluhdorn picked Robert Evans—then best known as a smooth young suit-and-cloaker who had become an actor and a Hollywood man-about-town—to be Paramount's version of Irving Thalberg. But Bluhdorn made sure that Evans was surrounded by tough businessmen, like Martin S. Davis, and the mixture was enormously successful: Paramount's run of box-office disasters was replaced by pictures like "Catch-22," "The Godfather," and "Love Story." Bluhdorn's talent for persuading people to do what they didn't want to do was in constant demand at Paramount, whether it was getting a reluctant Walter Matthau to co-star in Neil Simon's "The Odd Couple" or talking the agent Irving Lazar into accepting his offer for the screen rights to "Funny Girl."

Bluhdorn loved Hollywood, and the glamour that went with it—the private jet whisking him from Teterboro Airport in New Jersey to L.A., the discreet bungalow at the Beverly Hills Hotel, the atmosphere of luxurious decadence combined with hardheaded deal-making and unbridled competition, the opportunity to spar with egos that were even bigger than his. These were the late sixties, too, well before the fear of AIDS and the abuse of cocaine took their toll on people's lives in Beverly Hills and Bel-Air. It was the time of Hugh Hefner's West Coast Playboy mansion, of non-stop partying at the home of the financier Bernie Cornfeld, of parties at Bob Evans's home, where there were always dozens of beautiful girls—some of them swimming tirelessly back and forth in the floodlit pool just to give the guests something to look at. One of the many things Bluhdorn got out of his acquisition of Paramount was a reputation as a man who liked women. In one (possibly apocryphal) tale, he swept into the Plaza Hotel on his way to the Oak Room, saw a beautiful young woman sitting on the circular tabouret, and, turning to one of his P.R. men, told him to invite the woman to lunch. A few minutes later, the P.R. man returned from his mission, sweating and nervous, and told Bluhdorn that the woman had declined. It wasn't his fault, he explained—she was waiting for her husband. Bluhdorn glanced at the table setting in front of the empty chair where the P.R. man was to sit. "Take all that away," Bluhdorn was said to have told the maître d'. "He won't be eating with us."

Such stories of abrupt dismissal were common, but most of the people at the core of G. & W. were fanatically loyal to Bluhdorn, and he to them. Once he had decided that you were "my boy," or "a genius," or both, he was endlessly supportive, though you had to be able to withstand his ferocious attempts to persuade you to accept his point of view. In truth, the quickest way to gain his respect was to disagree with him, if you had your facts right and were willing to stick up for them. "God damn Snyder," he once said, speaking affectionately of the head of S. & S. "He *never* agrees with me!"

THE NEIGHBOR

Her five horrid, deformed little dogs, who incessantly yap on the roof under my window;
her cats, God knows how many, who must piss on her rugs—her landing's a sickening reek;
her shadow, once, fumbling the chain on her door, then the door slamming fearfully shut:
only the barking, and the music, jazz, filtering as it does day and night into the hall.

The time it was Chris Connor singing "Lush Life," how it brought back my college sweetheart,
my first real love, who, till I left her, played the same record,
and, head on my shoulder,
hand on my thigh, sang sweetly along, of regrets and depletions she was too young for,
as I was too young, later, to believe in her pain: it startled, then bored, then repelled me.

My starting to fancy she'd ended up in this firetrap in the Village, that my neighbor was she;
my thinking we'd meet, recognize one another, become friends, that I'd accomplish a penance;
my seeing her—it wasn't her—at the mailbox, gray-yellow hair, army pants under a nightgown:
her turning away, hiding her ravaged face in her hands, muttering an inappropriate "Hi."

Sometimes, there are frightening goings-on in the stairwell, a man shouting, *Shut up!*
the dogs frantically snarling, claws scrabbling, then her, her voice, hoarse, harsh, hollow,
almost only a tone, incoherent, a note, a squawk, bone on metal, metal gone molten,
calling them back, Come back, darlings; come back, dear ones, my sweet angels, come back.

I WAS drawn into Bluhdorn's circle of interest by chance. In 1980, I had published "The Fifth Horseman," a novel by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, which foretold a terrorist attack on New York City by Palestinians, using a smuggled hydrogen bomb. Collins and Lapierre were journalists, graduates of *Newsweek* and *Paris-Match*, respectively, and they therefore managed to give the book a certain scary realism, writing it in the same breathlessly documentary style that had made previous books of theirs—"Is Paris Burning?" and "O Jerusalem!"—international best-sellers. Bluhdorn had been involved in the movie production of "Is Paris Burning?," and, despite the fact that the picture turned out to be an artistic and financial disaster, he had conceived a certain admiration for the two authors. I do not know whether he had actually read "The Fifth Horseman," but something in the book sparked in him the spirit of Paul Revere. Over and over, with mounting passion, he would hold up meetings while he explained to startled financial managers how New York City could be blown to pieces—all of it, even the G. & W. tower, for Chrissakes—by terrorists, and nobody was prepared, nobody was taking this seriously! It could be happening, he would cry, at this very minute!

Bluhdorn scared a lot of people with this scenario, though not the Mayor, the President of the United States, or the New York *Times*. The only way to make people aware of the danger, he finally decided, was to make "The Fifth Horseman" into a movie, a *big* movie, which he soon convinced himself would also be an international box-office hit. Unfortunately, there was one obstacle, even after Bluhdorn had managed to buy the rights from the authors' agent, Irving Lazar: Barry Diller, who was then running Paramount (and doing a brilliant job of it), didn't want to make it. Diller's ability to handle his mercurial boss smoothly was legendary, and whenever their ongoing discussion about "The Fifth Horseman" got out of hand Diller simply reminded

Medea she was, next time I saw her, sorceress, tranced, ecstatic, stock still on the sidewalk,
ragged coat hanging agape, passersby flowing around her, her mouth torn suddenly open,
as though in a scream, silently though, as though only in her brain or breast had it erupted:
a cry so pure, practiced, detached, it had no need of a voice or could no longer bear one.

These invisible links that allure, these transfigurations even of anguish that hold us:
the girl, my old love, the last, lost time I saw her, when she came to find me at a party:
her drunkenly stumbling, falling, sprawling, skirt hiked, eyes veined red, swollen with tears;
her shame, her dishonor; my ignorant, arrogant coarseness; my secret pride, my turning away.

Still-life on a rooftop: dead trees in barrels, a bench, broken; dogs, excrement, sky.
What pathways through pain, what junctures of vulnerability, what crossings and counterings?
Too many lives in our lives already, too many chances for sorrow, too many unaccounted-for pasts.
Behold me, the god of frenzied, inexhaustible love says, rising in bloody splendor: *Behold me!*

Her making her way down the littered vestibule stairs, one agonized step at a time;
my holding the door, her crossing the fragmented tiles, faltering at the step to the street,
droning, not looking at me, "Can you help me?" taking my arm, leaning lightly against me;
her wavering step into the world, her whispering, "Thanks, love," lightly, lightly against me.

—C. K. WILLIAMS

Bluhdorn that all he had to do was sign a memo *ordering* him to make "The Fifth Horseman," and send it. The picture would then be made.

But that was the one thing Bluhdorn couldn't, or wouldn't, do. He believed in delegating authority. Besides, if the project failed he wanted to be able to say to Diller that making the movie had been *his* decision, not Bluhdorn's. Diller was secure in the knowledge that, however much Bluhdorn might rant and rave at him, his boss would never send that memo. The only people who didn't understand this were the authors, who assumed that when Bluhdorn wanted something done it was done.

As the editor of the book, I was dragged into this imbroglio because of my knowledge of the story—I was the one person who could be certified as having actually read the book. Thus I was summoned one Saturday to Bluhdorn's country home, about an hour away from my own, for a "story conference," the purpose of which, I soon discovered, was to persuade Milos Forman, the director of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," to sign on as the director of "The Fifth Horseman." This was in the nature of an end run around Diller: Bluhdorn figured that if he could get a treatment, a director of real stature, and a couple of stars committed to the project Diller would find it hard to keep saying no.

Bluhdorn's country home was vast, and handsomely landscaped. I was immediately conducted to the pool house, where Forman, casually dressed, and Bluhdorn, in the kind of matching short-sleeved shirt and shorts that men used to wear at Miami Beach hotels in the fifties, were sitting under an awning, lighting up their cigars. It was a peaceful, bucolic setting, except that the telephones in the pool house never stopped ringing, and the huge pool was empty of water. This struck me as odd on a day when the temperature was in the humid nineties, and as I sat down I remarked politely on what a nice pool it was, adding that it was sort of a pity there was no water in it.

"Pool? *What* goddam pool?" Bluhdorn asked, shaking his head impatiently. "We're not here to swim, God damn it. We're here to talk about the goddam 'Fifth Horseman.'"

Having put me in my place, he exchanged movie gossip with Forman for a while, and then launched into his set piece about "The Fifth Horseman" and the need to wake the country up—the whole goddam world, in fact. Forman nodded at appropriate moments, his eyes half closed. He might have been thinking about lunch, for all one knew.

When Bluhdorn finished, he lit another cigar and asked Forman to comment. Forman patiently explained the many difficulties of turning "The Fifth Horseman" into a movie. He shared Bluhdorn's enthusiasm, of course, but the ending was weak, a real letdown. The cop who is the good guy finds the bomb at the last moment, and scientists defuse it. It's predictable, Forman said, and it's a disappointment for the audience. Bluhdorn nodded. It was apparently not the first time he'd heard this criticism. He pointed his cigar at me. "What do you say to that?" he asked, as if the ending were my fault.

I shrugged. "The ending works in the book," I said. "For the movie you could do something different. In all these books, like 'Black Sunday,' and so on, the terrorists' bomb gets defused at the last moment. Maybe in the movie you should make the audience believe that's what's *going* to happen, and then, at the very last second, you show a hydrogen bomb going off in New York City. The cop has failed. If that doesn't shock the audience, I don't know what will."

There was a long silence. "You mean we fry eight million New Yorkers?" Bluhdorn asked.

"Probably not all of them," I said

cheerfully. "People in Queens, the Bronx, and Staten Island would probably survive. . . . But that's not the point. Make the ending tough. Have the bomb go off."

There was a longer silence. Then Bluhdorn leaned over, rumpled my hair, and pinched my cheek. "No," he said. "That's a terrible idea. But at least you're trying. I want you to make this your No. 1 priority from now on."

It was nearly dark by the time we had finished, and I accompanied Forman to his car, struck by the fact that he had managed to spend an entire day talking to Bluhdorn without committing himself to making the picture. Did he really think the ending was the problem? I asked, as he settled back into the limo. He smiled. "Not really," he said. "The real problem is that it's never going to get made."

"My father used to say half of making movies is wasting time."

Forman rolled his eyes. "He was a wise man."

BLUHDORN didn't give up. The next time I heard from him was by way of a telephone call from one of his secretaries. Mr. Bluhdorn, she said, wanted me to join him for dinner at Saint-Tropez tomorrow night to talk about the movie. I said I'd be delighted, and asked where the restaurant was.

"It's not a restaurant—it's a place," the secretary said. "He wants you to join him for dinner in Saint-Tropez, France." Did I have a place to stay there? she wanted to know. Mr. Bluhdorn and his party were staying at the Byblos, one of the more glamorous hotels in the South of France. Would I like her to book me a room? I was momentarily tempted—the last time I had stayed at the Byblos was with my Uncle Alex and Orson Welles, after Welles had performed the astonishing feat, at Mère Terret's restaurant, in La Napoule, of eating two whole roast chickens before devouring a pot of her famous bouillabaisse—but then it occurred to me that by staying in the same hotel as Bluhdorn I would become part of his entourage, and might find it difficult to escape. No, I said, I would look after myself. I called Larry Collins, who, together with Dominique Lapierre, was the real object of Bluhdorn's visit, and asked for a bed; at the time, Collins and Lapierre had houses near each other in the hills above Saint-Tropez. Then I booked myself on the Concorde, and on a flight from Paris to Nice. It promised to be a splendid trip, at once full of nostalgia and free—chargeable, as Snyder pointed out, to the G. & W. corporate budget rather than to S. & S.'s. I decided to rent a Mercedes at Nice; there was no point in economizing on comfort.

After a comfortable day's travel, I arrived at Larry Collins's house with time to spare before dinner. Collins had received no word from the Bluhdorn party, so I went down to the Byblos and waited—prudently taking a book with me. Finally, after several hours, there was a bustle of limousines outside in the courtyard. Bluhdorn burst into the suite like a rocket, apparently unfatigued by nearly twenty-four hours of travel on a small airplane, and immediately made for the nearest telephone—one of those futuristic, streamlined models that the French are so fond of. He struggled, stabbing at the buttons and cursing until I put him out of his misery and placed a call to New York for him. Bluhdorn didn't waste time on amenities with whoever was at the other end: he simply demanded the price of various shares, gave orders to buy or sell, and unloaded enough sugar futures to fill God only knew how many trains and ships, his eyes bright despite the time change, a fresh cigar held delicately between his blunt, well-manicured fingers.

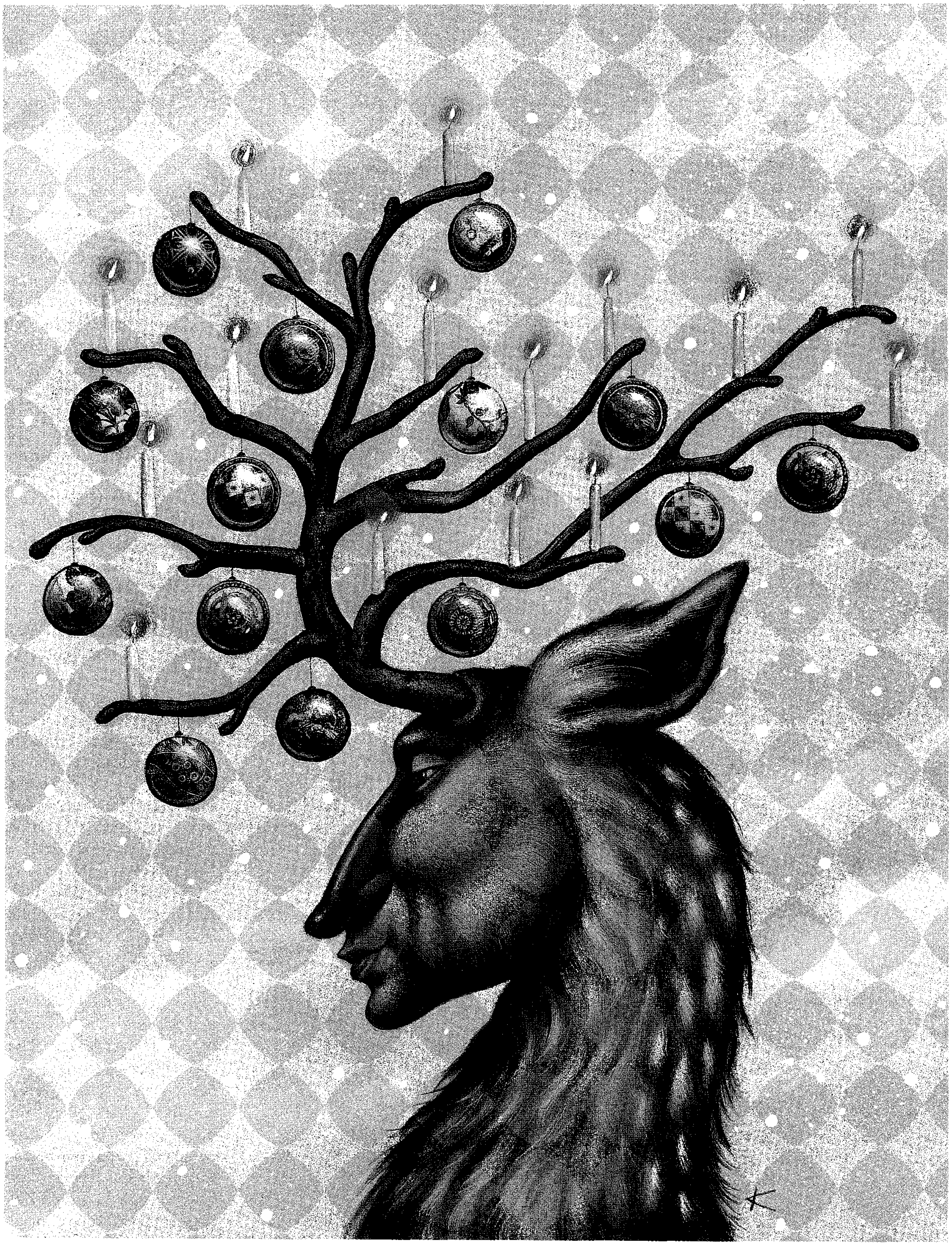
Bluhdorn's travelling companions, meanwhile, were slumped in armchairs; they looked so tired that their eyes seemed to have rolled up into their sockets. When I asked one of them how the trip had been, he groaned. Bluhdorn, he said, had not stopped talking all the way across the Atlantic—even when he went to the bathroom he left the door open a crack, so he could continue talking. Although hotel suites had been booked for Bluhdorn and his party everywhere along the route, they never left the airplane. Instead, so as not to waste Bluhdorn's time, people with whom he had business waited at the airports in New York, London, and Amsterdam to come on board the airplane. As soon as the meetings were finished, the airplane took off again for the next city.

Bluhdorn, having completed his call, was in motion again—sending a Paramount executive to search his luggage for a fresh supply of cigars, briefing us on our dinner host, ordering me to place one last call to New York. We descended to the lobby in a flying wedge, led by Bluhdorn, and found Collins and Lapierre waiting for us. Bluhdorn hugged them, pulled their earlobes, pinched their cheeks. They were his boys, he told them, and the goddam movie was going to get made if it was the last goddam thing he did. People had told him that "The Godfather" was a mistake, but he hadn't listened, and look what had happened. A huge fucking hit, one of the biggest ever! You had to believe, that was all, and he believed, he just wanted them to know that. This was said, I guessed, for the benefit of Diller, who, like me, had wisely found his own way to Saint-Tropez, and whose expression made it plain that he was not a believer.

Bluhdorn seated us in the limousine as if he were a tour director, and we set off for the home of Dino Fabbri, an Italian industrialist and printing magnate, who was both a close friend and a business partner of Bluhdorn's. Fabbri's house overlooked the sea, and the approach was hilly and winding, past small guesthouses and garages hidden among the small, fragrant pine trees of Provence. When we stopped, Bluhdorn charged up a broad flight of marble steps to embrace his host, who was tall, slender, and elegant, and didn't look as if he much enjoyed Bluhdorn's bear hug. He extricated himself and led us through room after magnificent room, each of them in the somewhat cold and formal style of the lobby of a very expensive but modern hotel de-luxe. Bluhdorn was on edge, trying to move as fast as he could, but Fabbri was determined to show us the grandeurs of his palazzo. Clearly, he had gone to a great deal of trouble to put on this dinner. Spread out gracefully in the rooms were any number of very beautiful women in couture dresses, and a few sleek men wearing the kind of summer suits that can be had only from a Roman tailor and never seem to crease or wrinkle. Under the subdued lighting, there was a sparkle of gold and gemstones, the jingle of bracelets blending with the hum of polite conversation in Italian or French. Bluhdorn, however, walked right past all this without a word until we reached the terrace, which was lit with blazing torchères. At the far end, a lavish buffet had been set up, and was attended by hovering chefs. There were piles of lob-

EASEL BY ANITA KUNZ

THE HOLIDAYS ARE UPON US



sters, displays of every imaginable kind of seafood, hot dishes, cold dishes—it was the kind of spread that one used to see on French ocean liners, or in French embassies on Bastille Day. Fabbri held out both arms in a gesture of hostly pride. "What do you think of that?" he asked.

Bluhdorn wasn't impressed. "Are we here to eat or to talk business?" he growled, and before we could even put a few *crevettes roses* on a plate, we were whisked off to a small library, where a few of the beautiful young women were pushed out, so we could discuss all over again, at interminable length, the problems of making "The Fifth Horseman" into a movie. Diller may have been tired, but he was not so tired that he had forgotten how to say no. While Collins and Lapierre told him all their ideas for turning the book into a script, he listened politely, shaking his head. In the end, even Bluhdorn got tired of the whole thing, and went off to call New York, while we—and our fellow-guests, to whom we had not been introduced—were finally allowed to sit down and eat. At about midnight, I was told that I should spend the night here, since Mr. Bluhdorn wanted to talk to me over breakfast. Too tired to be apprehensive, I allowed myself to be led away to one of the guesthouses, and immediately fell asleep.

In the morning, I walked up to the main house and found Bluhdorn already seated at a breakfast table on the terrace, surrounded by flowers and birds, reading the morning newspapers in several languages. He was wearing an open sports shirt in a vivid pattern, a pair of shorts, and sandals, but there was nothing relaxed about his manner. Did I think last night's meeting had gone well? he asked.

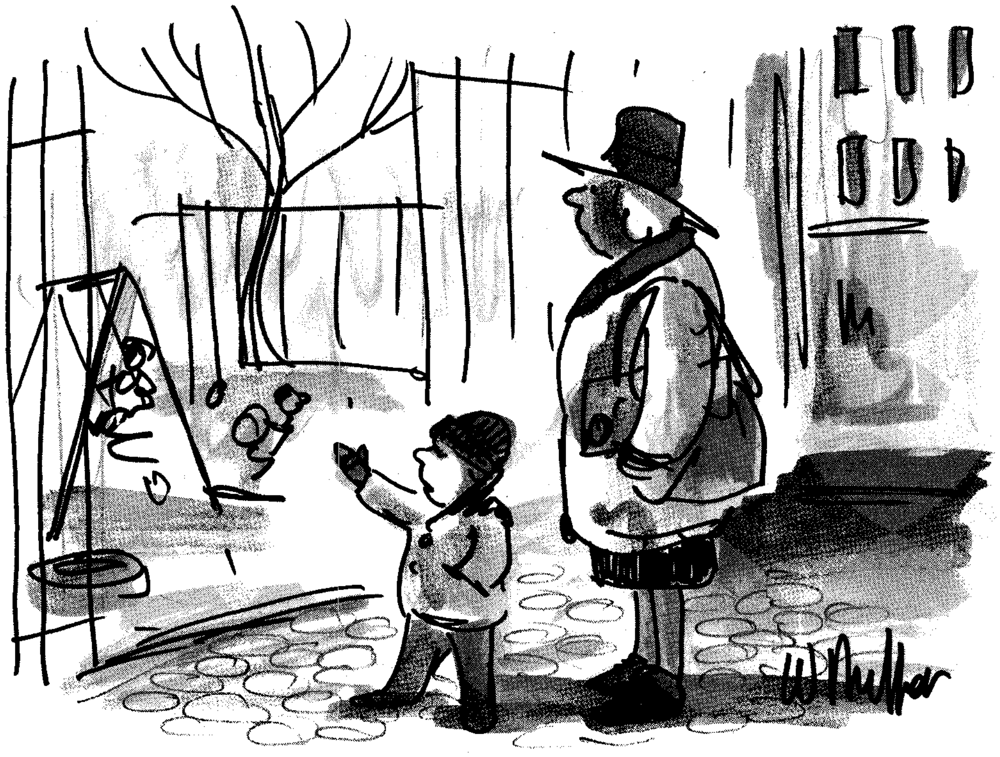
I sipped my coffee. I saw nothing to be gained by avoiding the truth. No, I didn't think so, I said. Whatever the story problems were, it didn't seem to me that they had been solved. Collins and Lapierre had produced reams of paper—notes, memos, screen treatments, plot breakdowns—but the fact remained that either you wanted to make a movie about Palestinian terrorists planting a hydrogen bomb in New York City or you didn't. If you did, there was enough material to make it, whoever wrote the screenplay. If you didn't, then no ideas, however many and however clever, would convince you.

Bluhdorn nodded. He was in a sunny mood; maybe it was the weather, or maybe he was simply a man who enjoyed breakfast. He lit a cigar and looked out over the orange groves and pine trees to the sea. "What the hell," he said. "We tried, right?" No answer seemed to be called for. "What else do you have to do here?" he asked. Nothing, I told him. He raised an eyebrow. "Jesus Christ," he said. "You mean you flew over here just for this one goddam meeting?" I nodded. He reflected on this and shook his head. "Then you'd better get right back to New York," he said.

I TOOK the first flight to Paris, got on the Concorde, and was back in New York that same day. The journey had been so rapid that a lot of people didn't even know I had been away, and after a few days I wasn't even sure myself.

Perhaps because "The Fifth Horseman" project appeared to be foundering, I never came that close to Bluhdorn again. But in any case Bluhdorn had more pressing concerns than the fate of one movie. In 1977, a series of muckraking pieces about his financial practices, written by Seymour Hersh, had appeared in the *Times*, and they set off an attack on G. & W., much of which seemed to be aimed at Bluhdorn personally. Hersh's charges stemmed from a defection that Bluhdorn regarded as a betrayal comparable to that of Judas: in 1974, Joel A. Dolkart, a partner at Simpson Thacher & Bartlett who was G. & W.'s general counsel, had been indicted on eighty-nine counts of fraud, including the embezzlement of two and a half million dollars, and after protracted plea bargaining he pleaded guilty to a single count of forgery and agreed to coöperate with investigators, giving the Feds (and Hersh) a rich harvest of allegations with which to torment Bluhdorn. It was, as one unnamed source told *Business Week*, "as if Kissinger had defected to Moscow."

Increasingly, Bluhdorn resembled a Spanish fighting bull—snorting, angry, reacting to pricks from the picador. At one point, he called the G. & W. executives together and, at the climax of a self-justifying speech, tore up a copy of the *Times* and flung the pieces at us in an unsimulated rage. It was not that any of the newspaper's allegations were, in themselves, all that startling. They included "questionable tax practices," "questionable



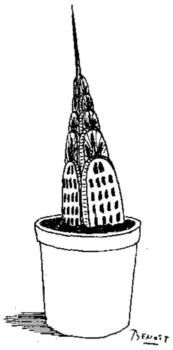
"I feel I've outgrown this facility, Mrs. Thompson. Could we see what else is around?"

corporate payments abroad," "unreported use of company resources for the private gain of senior company officials," "mishandling" of the company's annual financial statements, "a pattern of transactions . . . designed to conceal the true financial condition of the company," and what amounted to using the assets of the employee pension fund to bolster the value of stock in the portfolios of senior executives.

Many of the charges were pretty much the norm in high-flying conglomerates like G. & W. After all, nobody had ever pretended that G. & W. was A.T. & T. or I.B.M.; it was a company in which executives were expected to think on their feet, to take risks, and to do everything they could to keep the stock price going up. It certainly wasn't the kind of company in which people spent a lot of time worrying about whether X or Y was really entitled to use one of the corporate jets, or whether the financial experts should be spending their time working on Bluhdorn's personal taxes. It was understood by both the shareholders and the executives that in a certain sense Bluhdorn *was* G. & W. It was Bluhdorn who had collected this odd group of companies, who continually bought and sold them, who was not just the spokesman for the company but its very reason for being. There simply was not, in his mind, a difference between himself and the company; they were one and the same.

This was not a position that Stanley Sporkin, the crusading director of the Enforcement Division of the Securities and Exchange Commission, was prepared to accept. What most people within the G. & W. family saw as merely management idiosyncrasies, or even lovable eccentricities on the part of the company's founder, appeared to Sporkin to be gross illegalities. The truth, some suspected, was that Bluhdorn's ambition and Sporkin's simply clashed—for Sporkin was a deeply ambitious man, and in Bluhdorn he doubtless saw an opportunity for endless coverage in the press about himself, the crusader for corporate justice and responsibility. "This will be a war," began one typical story, quoting one of the lawyers involved, and it more or less set the tone for the dispute.

The endless wrangle and the publicity that surrounded it—Sporkin turned out to be a master at manipulating the press—ended in 1981, in a kind of draw. The company basically agreed not to do what it had denied doing, and the S.E.C. dropped the charges. This way, both sides could claim victory, but from then on Bluhdorn stopped giving long, garrulous, and alarmingly frank speeches to financial reporters, and spent more time than before at his house in the Dominican Republic. On the rare occasions when I talked to him, he seemed as feisty as ever (he still had faith in "The Fifth Horseman"), but he kept a lower profile. At G. & W. functions, he seemed almost benign, as if the unwelcome exposure in the press had taken some of the edge off his furious assertiveness: he now portrayed himself as an elder business statesman, and wanted people to see G. & W. as a successfully completed organization, not as a conglomerate that was constantly changing, unfinished and fluid, subject to his whims. He brought about this transformation—on paper, at any rate—by splitting G. & W. into divisions. Paramount and Simon & Schuster, for instance, were lumped together in the Leisure Time Group; the grandly named Consumer Products Group was "principally engaged in the manufacture and sale of cigars"; and so on, until some eight hundred and fifty products and services had been divided into eight "groups": a Procrustean way of proving that the company had matured. "Synergy," the magic word that was supposed to explain to shareholders and other rubes what the purpose of all this conglomeration was, now became a war cry within the company, as though there really were some way to find a link between auto parts, mattresses, movies, resort hotels, sugar, zinc, and books, if only we held enough meetings about it.



BLUHDORN'S energy remained undiminished, and so did his notorious inability to relax. Once, while I was visiting the Dominican Republic for an S. & S. sales conference, I was invited by Mrs. Bluhdorn and her daughter to look at their horses. Elegant, beautiful, and gracious, Mrs. Bluhdorn showed me the ranch, where there were, indeed, a number of magnificent horses. I should come back one day, she said, when I had more time. Charlie loved going on picnics up in the mountains. It was a wonderful way to spend a day: a long ride up into the hills, a swim in a clear mountain stream, then a delicious picnic, and the ride back. . . . I nodded appreciatively at the thought of this idyll, but I found it hard to imagine Bluhdorn on a horse, let alone giving up a whole day to a picnic. Did Mr. Bluhdorn, I asked, enjoy riding? Mrs. Bluhdorn laughed. "No, no," she said. "Charlie joins us for lunch in the helicopter, so he can make calls. Then he flies back afterward."

That was a picture I could imagine, all right—the horses climbing the forest trails while Bluhdorn followed in the helicopter (struggling with the radio, as he did with all methods of communication, none of which were fast enough for him), buying or selling sugar, or stock, or companies, and champing at his cigar as he hovered over the lush tropical landscape, much of which he owned.

As he became less visible, there were rumors of illness, even of cancer, but in the end it was no surprise when he died suddenly, of a heart attack, at the age of fifty-six, while he was flying back to New York from the Dominican Republic one day in February, 1983. He had lived his life at twice the pace of any normal man—even of a normal ambitious business executive. In an age of increasing corporate blandness, when C.E.O.s seemed determined to behave as if all business were a kind of public service, Bluhdorn was the last of the great business eccentrics: a one-man band, who made capitalism seem not only profitable but fun. Always a trader at heart, he treated the American business world as if it were a supermarket—rushing about in it like a demented shopper, picking up bargains without a shopping list to guide him. The last time I saw him, for a few brief seconds, at some G. & W. function—even in the dim light of the Top of the Park restaurant, above the G. & W. building, he looked pale and gaunt—he paused only long enough to say, "Jesus Ke-*rist!* You tell those boys I'm still going to get that goddam movie made." The rasping self-confidence in his voice and the broad grin were still there, but, of course, the movie never did get made. After his death, the subject never came up again. To tell the truth, I missed it. ◆

A CRITIC AT LARGE

ESCAPING PICASSO

The Great Modern Master who never was.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

LIKE many young art historians of my generation, I did a little feeding on Picasso's corpse. We couldn't help it: it was the biggest body on the beach, the washed-up whale, and we needed a meal. This was in the early eighties, when the historical study of modern art, with some shining exceptions, was still anchored in rich, sedate museums and poor, excitable magazines. That gave it an edge of polemic, and to turn that polemic into history meant, we believed, attaching it to something else, something more, something outside the pictures.

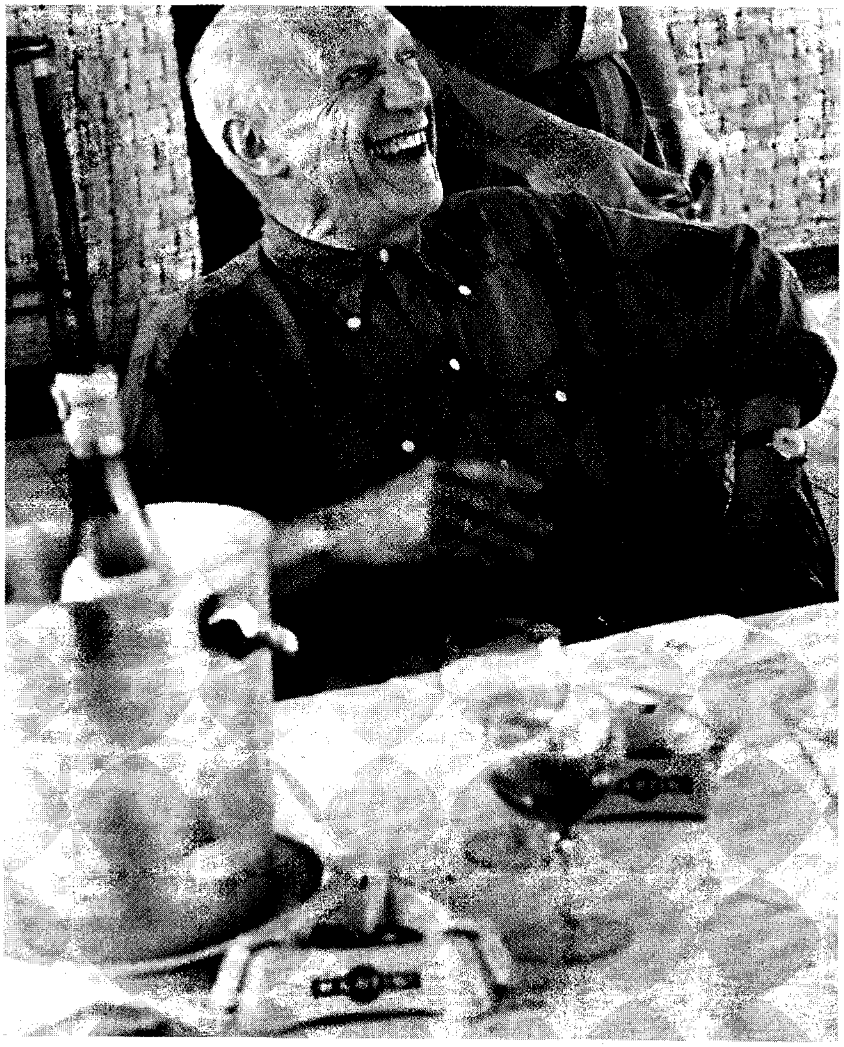
For a lot of us, that something else was not the world, in all its strangeness, but a life, in all its positive detail—just what happened to one artist, narrowly cast. Studying, as I did, at the Institute of Fine Arts with the greatest of Picasso scholars, William Rubin, was an inspiration, since the idea that a man of such intimidating aplomb, born to lead orchestras or armored divisions, had submitted so much of his life to the modest discipline of parsing the biography and the symbols of a single painter carried with it an overtone of religious vocation. Rubin spent, as I recall, most of a long term worrying through the significance of a derby hat that keeps springing up in Picasso's work around 1908. (It turned out to be a symbol of Cézanne.) The first words of my own that I ever saw in print were in a "Note" (lovely, disingenuous term) on the "first appearance in the Picasso theatre" of a coded image of Marie-Thérèse Walter, Picasso's zaftig girlfriend of the late twenties and the thirties. The coded image was a monogram intertwining the initials "MT" and "P," which dated the beginning of their relationship several years earlier than "we" had previously suspected. (That this also meant that the fortyish Picasso was screwing a seventeen-year-old was not a point I was inclined to notice or note in the Note.) When, scared to death, I announced my little discovery in class, it was greeted with a solemn nod. Running off to a nearby bar to drink my very first vodka-on-the-rocks, I passed out and had to be carried home.

Truth, no matter what the price, is the essence of all avant-garde commitments, and we were, in our small way, committed. My two most gifted classmates went deeper into Picasso: one began compiling the first catalogue raisonné of Picasso's Cubist drawings, the other wrote a major book on Cubism and popular culture. The cult of Picasso biography, of course, remains a popular one—it's there in the Merchant-Ivory movie "Surviving Picasso"—but it is now a highbrow cult, too. At a time when authors as subjects have disappeared from English departments, or anyway have been stowed in the basement, like the bodies of the old codgers in "Arsenic and Old Lace," in art history the man himself still counts. When Rosalind Krauss remarked, in 1991, just before the publication of the first volume of John Richardson's promised four-volume biography of Picasso, that it would set Picasso studies back by forty years, she meant that fussing about Picasso's biography was a bad idea—but the complaint held within it the admission that people were going to fuss.

The second volume of Richardson's work, "A Life of Picasso, 1907-1917: The Painter of Modern Life" (Random House; $55), is now with us, to much deserved praise. If the Krauss clock is right, Picasso studies have now been set back eighty years, which would put us in 1916, not a bad time for Picasso studies: we could knock on his door and ask the right questions. Thanks to Richardson's new book, we'd even know which house on which street to go and knock at (5 *bis*, Rue Schoelcher, if I have it right). Richardson has figured it all out, and has got it all in. Rubin's derby is there, called a Kronstadt hat; even my little monograms make a suitably tiny appearance. Where the first volume told of Picasso's youth, the new one takes on the most exciting and original and indisputably important section of Picasso's career—the period from 1907, and the creation of the "Demoiselles d'Avignon," through his collaboration with Braque, and into the shared adventure of Cubism, collage, and constructed sculpture, which ends, resonantly and tragically, with the Great War. It's a formidable book, and, given its stature and reception, taking it on at all seems like taking a needle to a monument. But perhaps every monument needs its needle, to see whether it is really monumental or merely inflated. Apart from what may be wrong with the book—and there *are* things wrong with the way it is written and with what it argues—its unstated premises reflect, perhaps unconsciously, a predicament that all of us, professionals and amateurs alike, will have to confront if we are ever to take a disintoxicated view of the art of our century and why it matters.

RICHARDSON has mastered an enormous amount of difficult, diffuse, and just weird information, a lot of it necessarily sifted out of dubious and self-serving memoirs, to arrive at a thousand small usable truths. No author likes to be praised for neatness, but in a biography neatness counts for a lot, and this one is neat. More than neat, it is also truthful. Richardson's accounts of and verdicts on various murky episodes—Picasso's bizarre entanglement with a theft of statues from the Louvre, for example, or the meanings and motives of the Banquet Rousseau, the famous mock- (or perhaps not mock-) testimonial dinner held in the Douanier's honor—seem worldly and right. There are very few places where you do not think, This is probably the way it happened. Richardson has justified his time in the archives, and enlivened his book, by filling it not with trivial facts but with characters, almost every one a winner; for instance, Picasso's friend H.-P. Roché, who wrote "Jules et Jim," and liked to golf nude on the beach.

Best of all, there are moments, and lots of them, when Richardson gracefully and carefully hooks up the minor characters to the major work. When he seizes on and explicates some tiny detail—the way Picasso's girlfriend Eva's skill as a seamstress was probably crucial for his making constructed sculpture, or the way his eccentric friend Géry Pieret's liking for sandwich boards may have inspired one of the costumes for the ballet "Parade"—he does all that biography can do for art, which is not to show that art expresses a life but to show that art *is* life, in another dimension: that it is made up of the hundred bits of navel lint and household bric-a-brac and family jokes that constitute our own existence, only fixed for good, still breathing. Although Richardson is rather dismissive of the social history of art, what he has written is the best social history of the Cubist epoch. He has written something better than that, because it's less remote: an intimate history of the Cubist family; social history turned into clubhouse chronicle.



In a new biography, Picasso becomes a conscientious artist, a tender lover, a sound political thinker, a very good boy. Photograph by Alexander Liberman, 1954.

As a definitive critical biography of the life and work of a major modern painter, though, the book is, I think, a failure, betrayed, perhaps, by its faith in definitive criticism. The prose, so racy and confident when the subject is dealers or art-world politics, is surprisingly lifeless when confronting the pictures. Throughout, the writing can be rote in its rhythms and its adjective-and-noun pairings: if someone is a big influence he is of "towering importance"; if he isn't around he is "conspicuously absent"; if Picasso is curious about what he does he has an "obsessive interest" in it (all this from one paragraph about Matisse). On every page, there are sentences like this: "These café discussions were made all the more fraught by Manolo, whose antipathy for Gris was one that only a hot-blooded, mocking Catalan steeped in the classical tradition could feel for a cerebral and humorless modernist from Madrid, who was a much more imaginative and inventive artist." Not only is this hard to follow—who's the better artist, Manolo or Gris?—but the insistent double adjectives give it a raindrop-on-the-roof rhythm, while that "hot-blooded, mocking Catalan" is pure S. J. Perelman.

The lapses in the prose matter most, however, when Richardson has to write about what the pictures look like, how they affect us, and what they mean. Then the flat, second-hand language becomes intermingled with a reductive fatuousness of method. To describe Picasso's Cubist pictures, Richardson settles on something that at times is not far from a formula. First, he places the pictures in the context of Picasso's collaboration and competition with Braque: is he ahead or behind? Then he says—and this insight seems to be the summit of his thinking on the human meanings of Cubism—that though the picture looks abstract, it really isn't. Then he finds the hidden picture, which is often a little joke about the sexual parts of one of Picasso's girlfriends, and then this joke is identified as the meaning. Whatever is left is neatly swept into a drawer marked "pictorial function"; sometimes there are also a few hand-waving phrases about "arcane beauty" or "inexhaustible inventiveness." The pictures matter, it seems, because they are ahead (of Braque's, of someone else's, or of their time) and because they are autobiographical in an occult way. This method leaves us with a vision of Cubism's importance that manages to be both narrowly historicist and cheaply personal: Picasso is great because he painted on Tuesday what looked like Wednesday, and told all about what had happened Monday night.

Here is an example, dealing with works from one of the high points of Cubist painting, the summer of 1911 in the town of Céret, which culminated in what many people believe is the greatest Cubist picture, Picasso's "The Accordionist," now at the Guggenheim:

> The arcane beauty of these paintings—their subtlety, gravity and mystery—is self-evident. But their meaning is not. A work like "The Accordionist," which is the product of phenomenal artistic intelligence as well as phenomenal artistic skill, makes far heavier demands on the acuity of our per-

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ceptions and wits than the Salon cubists' formulaic works. It also challenges our sense of structure, touch, humor, poetry (all those rhymes and double entendres) and, not least, our feelings about sex. If Picasso always insisted that his "Accordionist" is a woman, it was for good reason. As he often said, the subject of a painting is of the utmost importance. Here, the genital positioning of the "Pearl of Roussillon's" instrument is the clue. Her "squeeze box," as the accordion is vulgarly known, with its little buttons and keys, not to mention the manual inflation and deflation that controls the emission of sound, turns out to be what the painting is about.

This is, I think, a reasonable sample of the method, the prose, and its limitations. There is the unnecessary competitiveness (obviously, Picasso is better than his followers among the Salon Cubists) and its companion the bullying, unparticularized hype ("phenomenal artistic intelligence as well as phenomenal artistic skill"). There is the meaningless commendation (*all* art "challenges our sense of structure, touch, humor, poetry"; the question is how this particular picture does it differently from, say, the way "The Red Studio" or "The Monarch of the Glen" does it), and, worst of all, there is the insistence that the coded messages are the picture's real meaning (the squeeze-box joke is "what the painting is about"). Once the presence of an object in the pictures is established, it can instantly be promoted into a subject: if there's a squeeze box in there, it must be a love sonnet. Richardson again and again insists on an equivalence between the painterly evocation of a thing and the poetic realization of an emotion. "The Accordionist" is a wonderful picture, but it's hard to believe that it "challenges our feelings about sex" because it may contain a small sexual joke.

Elsewhere, Richardson analyzes the famous "Au Bon Marché" collage of 1913:

> The wineglass on the right floats as freely in space as an astronaut; the perfume *flacon* on the left is rather more grounded. Two bits of newspaper in the gap on the front of the box spell out a coded message: "*Lun B*," which sets up a rhyme with the words "*Lingerie Broderie*" above, and "*trou ici*" (hole here), which is all too evidently a reference to Eva. The significance of this deceptively simple-looking composition and its seemingly crude joke has been hotly and inconclusively disputed. My own view is that this collage opens up its secret if we see it in the light of "Woman in an Armchair" . . . which, as we have seen, portrays Eva genitally with the folds of her chemise arranged to make the same "*trou ici*" point in paint. In the collage, Picasso hides his mistress away in a box, or turns her into one, while also signaling that we have access to her. In "Woman in an Armchair," he makes the "*trou*" the theme of the painting.

Here, again, we have the cursory evocation and the abandoned metaphor (the object on one side is like an astronaut, the object on the other is, well, not like an astronaut) passing through the decoder ring (the picture "opens up its secret") and leading to the single-minded explanation (Picasso makes a "point in paint": the "*trou*" in "Woman in an Armchair" is "the theme of the painting"). Whether or not one accepts these interpretations on their own terms, they propose "meanings" at once so trivial that it's hard to feel much stirred by them and so deeply encrypted that it's hard to figure out why the pictures ever mattered to anyone before.

When Richardson does try to transcend the inventory of hidden objects in the picture and to write about their general emotional effect, things don't improve much. We're told, for instance that the "Man with Guitar" now at the Modern was painted just after the death of Picasso's father, and that "the way the all-black face, crisscrossed with ghostly lines, extends into a tall black hat seems to betoken death." But later in the book Richardson, discussing Picasso's brightened palette in pictures made the following year, writes that it may have been "Eva's illness and the imminence of war that inspired him to lighten and brighten his palette and give the final phase of cubism an unprecedented sparkle." If the pictures are dark, it's because your dad just died. If they are light and bright, it's because your girlfriend is dying. This is a game with no rules.

Taking up the literary sources that reach outside the pictures, Richardson has an odd weakness for the big-name, O.K. influence, even in the face of hard evidence and common sense. He has an idée fixe, for instance—so vital to his vision that he takes the subtitle of his volume from it—that Charles Baudelaire's famous essay of 1863, "The Painter of Modern Life," provided Picasso with a program for his own painting, nearly half a century later. Richardson's evidence is the existence of stylized drawings of women in carriages, and the fact that the first drawings of the "Demoiselles" depict the girls as prostitutes; Baudelaire had offered, as possible subjects for art, fashionable people in carriages in the Bois de Boulogne and whores in a whorehouse. Arguing against this is the fact that Picasso's finished paintings of 1907 and 1908 are obviously part of a fin-de-siècle reaction against the kind of journalistic, photographic reportage that Baudelaire called for, and that the Cubist pictures are not scenes from modern life at all, in Baudelaire's roving-reporter sense; they are just pictures of what is at hand, a lot of it more nostalgic than contemporary. To insist that Baudelaire's essay could have supplied an agenda whose Second Empire list of "modern" subjects Picasso would so literally have followed seems wishful. Nothing dates faster than your grandfather's idea of the modern. To call a biography of the most exciting young painter of the nineteen-hundreds "Picasso: The Painter of Modern Life" is an anachronism on the order of calling a biography of the most exciting young singer of the fifties "Elvis: The King of Swing."

What makes this insistence on Baudelaire even stranger is that Picasso was surrounded by poets—the inspired, dwarfish Max Jacob, for one. Though Jacob comes to life in Richardson's biography as a comic minor character—we hear about his "anal proclivities," his love for "the roughest 'trade,' " his "louche adventures"—there is not a single paragraph devoted to an analysis of his poetry, or to how closely its love of dumb jokes that suddenly back into sublimity resembles that of Picasso's Cubist paintings. (This relationship was long ago the subject of a very good book, Gerald Kamber's "Max Jacob and the Poetics of Cubism.") Anchoring the art in a distant Baudelairean notion of "pictures of modern life" simply drops a big name, and offers a false, comforting sense that Cubism is just realism with shingles. Richardson also makes too much of his conviction that an El Greco that turned up in Paris around 1905 inspired the "Demoiselles"; he even argues that, in this most scabrous, angular, and nearly obscene of modern pictures, Picasso was "helping himself to El Greco's sacred fire." In the Cubist world, where Buffalo Bill's mustache and Apollinaire's puns and Max Jacob's drunken aeronauts and Derain's nudes are right at hand, Baudelaire's love of Second Empire costume and El Greco's attenuated visions are extremely distant connections. To make them central and decisive is to confuse historical foreground and background in a very basic way. It is also to make Picasso into, of all improbable things, a curiously unmodern figure, a respectful curator of continuities.

There is, in other words, a failed connection between what Richardson knows about the circus absurdity of the Cubist epoch and the responsible things he thinks he ought to say about the pictures. For Richardson, the clamor and the mischief and the metaphysics stop short at the painting's edge: there everything becomes Art. It is as if he needed to justify his own project—a four-volume biography—by making Picasso into a particular kind of museum-ready great artist. His Picasso is an honorable man and a great master, in a line of continuity with other honorable men and great masters since the Renaissance. He does not feel quite comfortable unless he always has Picasso the artist clearly lined up with the classics. For Richardson, even Cubism—even the "Demoiselles d'Avignon"—has to be seen as a considered harvest of pictorial ideas and iconographic programs, of a kind that may be full of "advances" and "breakthroughs" but is still anchored in a familiar, monumental Beaux-Arts tradition. So Richardson's Picasso, to justify Picasso's Richardson, has to be a scholar. Even more improbably, he has to be a gentleman. Richardson's biography has been compared to George Painter's of Proust and Leon Edel's of Henry James, and this is uncomfortably true in the sense that he, too, is often stuffy where his subject was not. Picasso, a true twentieth-century character, out of Brecht or Bruno Schulz—an opportunist, a *blague* artist, a coward, who sat out two wars while his friends were suffering and dying (he may have been right to do this in the First War, but he did it again, in the same way, in the Second)—is made into a conscientious artist, a tender lover, a sound political thinker, a very good boy.

RICHARDSON'S need to make Picasso into a serious artist and an honorable man (instead of the inspired poetic rascal he actually was) deforms, above all, his account of Picasso's relations with women. Good-natured, and even generous, in his references to other people's Picasso scholarship, he is unusually contemptuous of any feminist critique of Picasso and his art. Defending him, Richardson writes at one point, "So much for recent attacks by self-promoting 'moralists,' who choose to judge this

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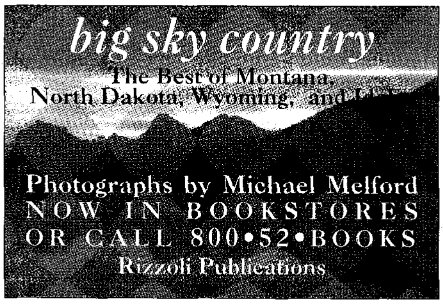
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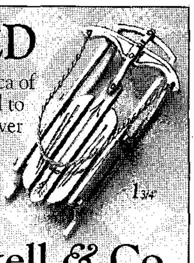

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great artist, born into another age and another culture, by the light of today's cant." It's hard to see why Picasso's misogyny isn't as reasonable a subject for Picasso criticism as, say, Eliot's anti-Semitism is for Eliot criticism. In both cases, a number of views are plausible. Richardson doesn't want to make any of the obviously reasonable cases: that Picasso was no worse than a lot of other men of his time; or that he was young and foolish and in a hurry; or that his sexual predations, however unappealing, were inseparable from the energies that made him an interesting painter. Instead, he wants to make the case that Picasso was, as he puts it, "as much sinned against as sinning." (He actually uses that phrase, which, if it means anything, means that Picasso may have routinely mistreated women, but women were routinely mistreating Picasso.)

Here are some of the relevant facts. In the period covered by Richardson's book, Picasso was involved with two women (there were others, but these are the two most important): first with Fernande Olivier, his mistress of many years, and then with Marcelle Humbert, who was also called Eva Gouel, and for whom he left Fernande in 1912. Fernande, who had seen Picasso through his hardest years after his arrival in Paris, was neither a fool nor a dependent; in the summer of 1909, which she and Picasso spent in the Spanish village of Horta, she wrote to Alice Toklas asking for translations of "Barnaby Rudge," "Martin Chuzzlewit," and "The Mystery of Edwin Drood." The same summer, she was sick with a serious kidney ailment, which was so painful that she had to spend much of the summer in bed. She wrote to Gertrude Stein:

> Now and then I have attacks of unbearable pain in my kidneys and my side; it's as if I am going to die of cold. This has happened only twice, but it has left me very weak and exhausted. A lot of blood in my urine, sometimes nothing but blood. Pablo is terribly irritated by this. . . .
>
> Pablo is grumpy and I get nothing in the way of moral or physical consolation from him. When my pain strikes, he goes very pale. . . .
>
> Pablo is no help; he doesn't want to know anything. He's too self-centered to understand that it is I who now need him; that he is responsible for my condition, that it's largely he who reduced me to this state last winter. . . . And then I've something else to tell you; it's far from certain, but I may be pregnant. . . . Only eight days have gone by since my first inkling. But what will I do, pregnant and sick as I am.

Pablo, she concludes, "would let me die without noticing my condition."

It is Richardson's opinion that in this letter Fernande's "humor gives way to self-pity." He explains, "Sickness in women was apt to evoke Picasso's irritation; he would go on to visualize [Fernande] as what he later called a 'suffering machine,' " and Richardson lectures her by pointing out that "Dora Maar and his second wife, Jacqueline, would be subjected to far more anguish than Fernande, but they would never have made an issue of it. As for Fernande's pregnancy, this turned out to be mere fancy, a desperate plea for sympathy."

After Picasso left Fernande for Eva, a younger and more conventionally pretty woman, he never saw her again. She hustled for work, a lot of it demeaning, as Picasso became the richest artist of the century. In 1956, she was interviewed on French television. Richardson comments that Picasso thought this was "a disgusting performance. She was too old and fat and toothless to make a spectacle of herself; she who had personified beauty in his early work had made a fool of him." She had made a fool of him, that is, by no longer looking beautiful enough to have been attractive to Picasso. If Richardson does not explicitly endorse this judgment, he certainly doesn't seem appalled by it, either.

Eva was imperfect, too. Tragically, she got even sicker than Fernande had, and died, in 1915, of cancer. In the course of her long and horrible illness, Picasso repeatedly told his friends that he should have left her with Marcoussis, her previous lover, and landed *him* with her doctor's bills. Richardson protests, "Once again, Picasso's misogyny comes across as a macho pretense, a typically Andalusian device to conceal his very unmacho compassion. Of course he cared." His compassion was so vast that he had to hide it by constantly complaining that his beloved's dying was costing him too much money. But then we find out that as Eva lay ill—not yet dead but on her way out in a pain that we can scarcely imagine—the caring Picasso began to cast about for a new mistress. "There was no shortage of candidates," Richardson remarks brightly. "He fancied Irène Lagut, but she belonged to Serge, so he did not pursue her—at least for the time being. And then there was Hélène Perdriat, who was one of Roché's mistresses. . . . She was famously available." The approaching death of a lover can cause panic of all kinds; no one could blame, or even criticize, Picasso had he had sex with anyone standing. On the whole, though, men who care do not, when the love of their life is in the hospital dying of cancer, begin casting about for a mistress so coolly, nor does even a biographer who refuses to moralize need to defend his subject's cruelties so relentlessly.

DOES it matter? Or, rather, *how* does it matter? So Picasso was a creep with women, and Richardson gives him, out of a rather touching and, in this day, uncommon biographer's loyalty, too large a benefit of the doubt on the question—not to mention an improbably large scholarly library of old books and pictures. Who cares? Does it affect Picasso's art, or the way we see it? Here the reviewer needs to drop all pretense of magisterial loft, jump down from the bench, and start testifying. Last spring, I went for a walk in William Rubin's vast show, at the Museum of Modern Art, devoted to Picasso's portraits. I had been looking forward to it more than I can say—particularly since my old teacher's previous Picasso-centered show at MOMA, the "Picasso and Braque: Pioneering Cubism" show of 1989, remains the most dazzling museum exhibition I have ever seen. Picasso's portraits had been my first scholarly subject: this was where I came in, and what I wanted to get back into.

Yet in the new show two things about Picasso seemed suddenly and startlingly plain. The first was how short and limited his high period really was. Despite his early start and his long life, his good stuff was all done in a fifteen-year period centered on Cubism, the First World War, and its immediate aftermath. And surrounding the high period was a vast sea of kitsch, an almost bottomless vulgarity of imagination, an ugliness that was not the honest Medusa's-head ugliness of modernism but the glaring ugliness of falseness and sentimentality.

Picasso's misogyny was in evidence on every wall. Women are either bowls of fruit or praying mantises; it's always "Here's the hole" or "There's the harpy." And, along with misogyny, there was its Siamese twin, an oversweetened vision of family life in which the children's implied vacancy is really Dad's. (Children don't just stand around dressed up.) Fernande's phrase "Pablo is terribly irritated" (by the wife, the kids, the demands of being Pablo) is a motto you could put on a lot of the pictures.

But the real trouble, it seemed to me, was less the misogyny of the subjects than the banality of their articulation. The central comparison of the exhibition, meant to be revelatory not just of the fact of Picasso's genius but of its nature, juxtaposed two Picasso portraits painted on the same day in 1939, one of Dora Maar, the other of Marie-Thérèse Walter. The difference in style in the two pictures was meant to demonstrate Picasso's gift for poetic metaphor. Dora, an intellectual lady, is all spikes and thorns

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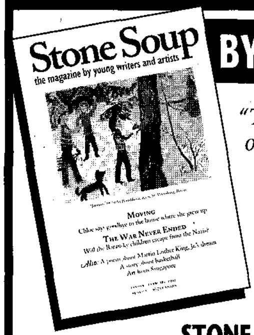

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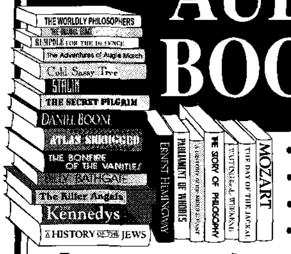

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and angles and sick, clashing tones; Marie-Thérèse, a babe, is all curves and fruit and arabesques and soft colors. A poetic imagination of a kind was, I suppose, at work, but what greeting-card poetry: “My love is like a bowl of fruit / and I'm like a banana.”

It wasn't just that the rhetoric was banal but that it was complacent. Picasso's is not the familiar egoism of the artist so wrapped up in his own observations that he thinks whatever he sees must be the vocabulary of a universal language, and finds the things that interest him so interesting (they're *his*) that he believes them to be the possible material of a universal rhetoric. (Sometimes they are, or can be made to be—Degas and his ballerinas, Cézanne and his pears.) Picasso's egoism is that of an artist so wrapped up in himself that when he uses a conventional rhetoric he genuinely thinks that it sounds like his own voice.

Slow, painful ascents and long, sad declines—these are part of the ordinary rhythm of making art. But they usually result from the search for a private language, a voice, and then from working that voice until it goes hoarse. When Picasso was bad, he was always bad in the same way. He began, in his Blue and Rose periods, with a completely self-confident bravura voice that happened to be speaking entirely in clichés. The wan saltimbanques, the commedia-dell'arte figures (as stale then as they are now), the soulful guitar players, blue because they are blue, the sad clowns, the femmes fatales—used scenery found in the pantomime prop room—are sincerely put forth by him as though they were a private language. It is perhaps not so curious that people accepted the stale rhetoric in Picasso, by turns, as modernized classicism and as classic modernism; it is curious, though, that we still do, or are instructed to.

Only with the coming of Braque and Cubism does this rhetoric get replaced by a much more matter-of-fact and taciturn vocabulary. What made Cubism great is not that it gave Picasso a means of self-expression but that it acted as a *barrier* to self-expression—pretty much the only one he ever met. His normal obsessions and compulsive self-absorption could break through, for once, only in code and cipher, in puns and borrowed typefaces. This is one of the things that make Richardson's insistence on “cracking the code” so unilluminating: Cubism is a code where the code is more interesting than the message. After Cubism, the resistant cipher is lost, and all that's left is Pablo.

And, left to his own devices, Picasso returned to the same language of clichés with which he had begun, and which eventually wore so thin that he ended up with piping Pans and chunky dancing nymphs and doves of peace. Even the “Guernica,” which for two generations stood for responsible modernist humanism, now looks humane only in the way that Malraux's “Man's Hope” does: as an agglomeration of melodramatic nineteenth-century properties and effects orchestrated into the appearance of authenticity. In the “Guernica,” all the horror is distanced, not with the organizing distance of memory but with the safe distance of quotation. The careful pyramidal construction, so obviously borrowed from Greek pedimental sculpture; the brutal bull and the suffering horses; the swooping spirits and the broken swords; the anguished clenching hand and the histrionically screaming head—all the machinery has the effect of making the “Guernica” seem curiously out of its time; it describes a much more orderly massacre than any we have known. The urge to organize horror in such conventional terms is a denial of the modern insight, as old as Dada, that certain kinds of horror are falsified, betrayed, by the classical organization of elegy or memorial. Miro and Matisse might have felt as deeply about the bombing of a small town, but their self-wrought styles would have denied them access to the prop room.

ONE of the accomplishments of modern painting was to turn conventional metaphors of value on their heads: big paintings, like Rothko's and Matisse's, became intimate; pitch-black paintings, like Malevich's or Reinhardt's, became cheerful; bright and richly painted pictures, like Bacon's, became tragic. Picasso, on the other hand, outside Cubism, works entirely within the most conventional language: a black-and-white painting is “stark,” and is about suffering; a bright-colored one is about a pretty girl. Their familiarity is part of what makes them popular, but it also makes them curiously unmemorable as images. This may explain why there doesn't seem to be a passion for Picasso's individual pictures, as there is for van Gogh's little rooms, or Seurat's beaches, or Rothko's blobs; the passion is for Picasso "the Promethean artist," "the protean magician," and so on. The grand-masterish clichés are not very different from those of the old Hemingway cult, from really-big-guyism. We look in vain for something more, something other-indulgent—some vision of existence that, however rooted it may be in individual misery or trapped in a single body, may at least, like van Gogh's, make the trap itself the subject. With Picasso, we look for a subject and find only a self.

This is in part to say that the faults of Richardson's biography are not entirely, or even primarily, Richardson's. If he is stuck in a corner, Picasso painted him into it. There is no story to tell about Picasso, other than a story about his innovations and his sex life. His reputation depends on his being Picasso, and this is not a later overlay or corruption but is essential to the enterprise as he set about it. There is no enduring emotional core, no criticism of life, no oddity or tenderness or magic. The only way to construct a continuous narrative about Picasso is to accept the idea that art is a competitive sport and its meanings are a form of gossip.

That dull Merchant-Ivory movie "Surviving Picasso" has been much criticized for showing, for legal reasons, only "faked" paintings of Picasso's work in the forties and fifties, but no one has had quite the courage to say that it's hard to tell them from the real ones, except that Picasso's real ones of the time were even worse. John Richardson has bitterly attacked the film, entirely out of proportion to its virtues or demerits, and one can't help feeling that this is because he is telling the same story, only with different plus and minus signs: Picasso as good genius instead of evil.

THE idea of Picasso as a protean, all-absorbing hero-artist, a twentieth-century Leonardo, has always been a fantasy. The conditions of modern painting which allowed its beauty also kept it from having that kind of mastery, that kind of embodied authority. Of all major modern artists, Picasso is the most slavishly dependent on the century's vestigial system of false values. Without the Continuing Saga of Pablo's Greatness, there's not much there, except some wonderful drawing and a lot of irritability. All you have to look at is his damn greatness. Harold Rosenberg, in these pages over many years, may have worked the point to death, but his central insight about modern art was, I now think, the right one: what makes modern painting interesting is its inability to offer polished meanings, secure achievements, and neat Old Masterish careers. In the twentieth century, it is possible only to stammer your way into greatness, or to splash your way into it, or to joke your way into it. Otherwise, you have to pretend that nothing has really changed, and build up cult figures who are supposed to have continued the old dispensation by the sheer magnetism of their personalities. Modern art of the heroic kind becomes a bullfight after the bulls have all gone home. The artist, having to go on, pretends to be the bull, and then he pretends to be the matador. This act has its poetry, but you can't pretend that it's the same as the other kind of bullfight. The Picasso cult remains, at the end of the century as it was at the beginning, a part of this pretense, grand masterism based on wishful thinking, grand masterism floating free from value, grand masterism feeding on its own grandness. In the end, it turns out to be just another kind of celebrity worship.

In a now famous speech in the mid-eighties, Tom Wolfe sneered at Picasso by saying that he was this century's Bouguereau—though for Wolfe the academic painter seems to have been just a swear word. The great art historian (and Picasso scholar) Leo Steinberg responded by asking who, then, was this century's Picasso—the protean, dominating, all-over, triple-crown master artist? To which Wolfe, by art-historical legend, anyway, was silent.

Well, God knows Picasso is no Bouguereau. But he may very well turn out to be this century's Ingres—a master draftsman, with a single, reiterated erotic vision, who became the little god of the academies and had (as Picasso himself knew and said) no artistic conscience at all. Like Picasso's, Ingres's emotional coarseness gave a kind of reassurance that what was passing still held on—that what was no longer quite real as feeling might be made real as art. For Ingres's admirers, what was reassuring was a kind of cartoon classicism; for Picasso's, it's a cartoon romanticism. And, if Picasso is the modern Ingres, who then *is* the modern Picasso? We never had one. It was what made us modern. ◆

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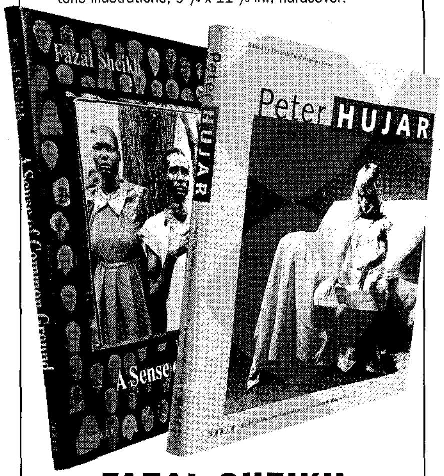

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MUSICAL EVENTS

THE BATTLE OF BRITTEN

His bittersweet operas are in prickly bloom.

BY ALEX ROSS

Is a composer worth more than a birdbath? The debate began last July, in Aldeburgh, a grimly beautiful fishing village on the east coast of England. The town council had been considering a proposal for a statue of Benjamin Britten, who made Aldeburgh his home and musical base from 1947 until his death, in 1976. The council decided to decline; Britten seemed to have more than sufficient local exposure, and money would be better spent on public improvements, such as a birdbath. Controversy flared in the national press. Pro-Brittenites snorted that Aldeburgh had recently seen fit to erect a statue of Snooks, a dog. Malcolm Williamson, a minor composer who holds the title Master of the Queen's Music, unexpectedly joined the opposition, calling Britten's music "ephemeral" and making a sinister reference to "the homosexual, pedophilia thing." This last stage of the episode should have been merely comic—in the words of an English friend of mine, the case of a mediocrity trying to remind the public he's still alive. But it meant that a cute flap had turned chilly. Old ghosts were stirring. The Britten Trouble had returned.

An uneasy feeling lingers around Britten, even in the country that virtually canonized him. Throughout his life, he was the kind of figure who met with loud applause at the front and murmurs from the back. England's greatest composer since Purcell, some said: one of the few contemporary composers who matter to a large audience; a master. Naïve, overclever, unsophisticated, others said: a writer of thin, dour music; a prodigy who never grew up. Not just the Master of the Queen's Music thought him a man of dubious morals, who enjoyed too much the company of boys. Several went as far as to call Britten a fundamentally dark soul, a man with a touch of evil in him. They pointed to the scenes of violence against the young which recur in his work, to the cruelties he visited on devoted associates, to the sometimes terrible cold flash of his eyes.

Britten still stirs bad memories in some who knew him, or envied him, or hated him on principle. As for others, his prickly musical voice simply fails to please; I count several highly cultivated Britten-haters as friends. Nevertheless, that voice is more than ever with us. New York is having an informal Britten-opera festival this season: the Metropolitan Opera has ventured "A Midsummer Night's Dream" for the first time, with a revival of "Billy Budd" to follow in the winter; "The Turn of the Screw" played at the City Opera earlier this fall; "Albert Herring" opens at the Manhattan School of Music this week. New recordings of the fifteen operas arrive once every few months. Although Britten's instrumental music still suffers neglect, this composer is making the transition to classic status.

To argue Britten's greatness is to enter a tricky region of terms and tastes. What does it mean anymore to be great? What is genius? In this case, a teasingly minimal definition by Thomas Mann seems apt:

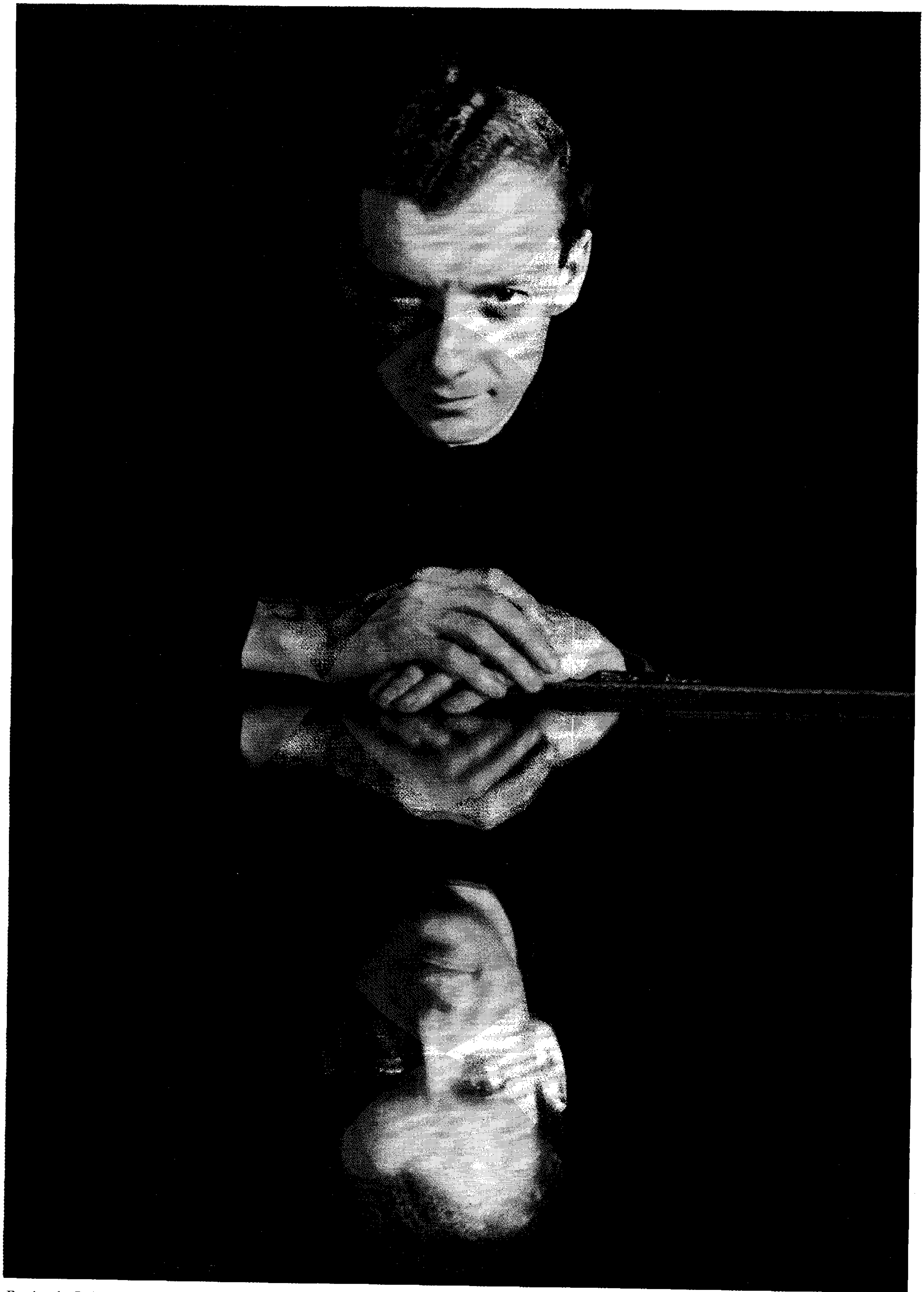
> That choice and chosen and complacent spirit . . . can take a poor fragment of your fund of knowledge . . . and by dint of charm and art (but these are mere words), no, rather simply by the fact that it is he and no other who gives out what has been given, can double and treble its value. It is as though by addition of *himself*, by stamping his own image on what he has picked up, he can make the whole worth infinitely more than all the book knowledge in the world. Others may drudge and scrape, hoard and refine; it is the king who mints the ducats.

Britten was one of the royal spirits. He could make music from a maddeningly trivial collection of notes. A few common chords in unexpected relation, an insistent fragment of melody, a shimmer of instrumental color combine to create a sound that is beautiful, uncanny, and complete.

I have evidence that catches Britten in the act. It is the end of Act II of "A Midsummer Night's Dream." "On the ground, sleep sound," sing the fairies in the magic wood as Puck prepares to cast his spell. The boys' chorus sings in a lilting lullaby rhythm; underneath, the orchestra plays upward-creeping chords, adding dissonances that are piquant rather than harsh. The passage is gorgeous but static: the same simple but odd sequence keeps repeating. As is so often true of Britten, the side-by-side triads have a childish sound, like a kid picking out chords but not knowing their conventional relations. Just in the last three bars, however, the sequence momentously shifts. It no longer rises but sighs in place; as the violin line falls downward, bright D-flat-major harmony turns shiveringly minor. It happens for just a second, and it's like a breath of colder air, or a fast-moving shadow. It marks the moment Puck disappears. There you feel the hand of the magician.

"The Turn of the Screw" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream" were first produced in 1954 and 1960, respectively. The extreme concision of their musical language is disorienting at first. Britten had made his name, after the Second World War, with "Peter Grimes" and "Billy Budd"—expansive, full-sounding operas, intended for major houses. In the next decade, he used a smaller orchestra, more astringent textures, shorter-winded melodies. He was writing more for his small-scale Aldeburgh Festival than for the international circuit. He had also isolated himself from twelve-tone and avant-garde composers. "I want my music to be of use to people, to please them," he said. Nothing could have been more exquisitely calculated to irritate the likes of Pierre Boulez and Luigi Nono (who once refused to shake Britten's hand). His merry slogans were in fact a poor description of his music, which never tastes pleasure without pain. Although he didn't abandon tonality altogether, he treated it roughly, cavalierly: all those simple chords come out spooked.

If you look closely at the harmony of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," you see that Britten actually uses a loose twelve-tone technique. That his intention was sly is shown in the musical parodies that



Benjamin Britten: He shared with Henry James a fascination for the intricate web between innocence and corruption. Photograph by Cecil Beaton.

accompany the Rustics' ridiculous play in the finale: alongside cut-rate Donizetti and whacked-out Grieg you hear Schoenbergian *Sprechstimme* in the moaning of the Wall. "The Turn of the Screw" pulls the same trick; several times, all twelve tones of the scale sound together. It is as if he were saying to the modernists, "I can play your game and still make people listen." ("The Turn of the Screw," his most dissonant opera, is also his most popular.) How does he maintain his famous directness of voice amid all these games? The composer Robert Carl may have found an answer in noticing that Britten's intricate accumulations of tones often resemble the natural series of overtones. As a result, the sharpest dissonances sound curiously "right." Such acoustical marvels explain why superrefined British contemporary composers like Colin Matthews and Oliver Knussen think the world of Britten.

Listeners have also increasingly acknowledged the complexity of Britten's response to his formidable literary sources. A franker discussion of the "homosexual, pedophilia thing" has helped, to a degree. The scholar Philip Brett has noticed musical similarities between Peter Quint, the ghost who possesses the boy Miles in "Screw," and Oberon, the fairy king who acquires a "lovely boy stolen from an Indian King" in "Dream": both are represented by exotic figures on the celesta (half Balinese gamelan, half Bartók). Oberon thus appears in a darker light than in the play, and Quint takes on an uncomfortable fairy-tale warmth. Sexuality is ultimately beside the point: Britten is most interested in the intricate web of circumstances between innocence and corruption. Innocence operates as evil, evil as innocence. Generosity breeds destruction; shady figures do good. These are Henry James's great themes, and it's no accident that James appears twice as the source for Britten's operas (the second instance being "Owen Wingrave").

ALL this is tempting bait for opera directors, who have been eager to try out visions more radical than anything the theatrically conservative Britten approved in his lifetime. The City Opera and the Met productions—by Mark Lamos and Tim Albery, respectively—both brought out the grimmer tones that everyone seems to see in Britten these days. Mr. Lamos's staging implied that the Governess, who ostensibly battles ghosts for the souls of the children in her care, is a complete Victorian hysteric: Quint and Miss Jessel and all their ghastliness emanate from her imagination. Maybe so, but the abstracted, harshly colored set, by John Conklin, never gave us an opportunity to weigh reality against hallucination, to settle into the first level of the story (haunted house) before considering the second (Freudian hysteria). It was all haunting and no house.

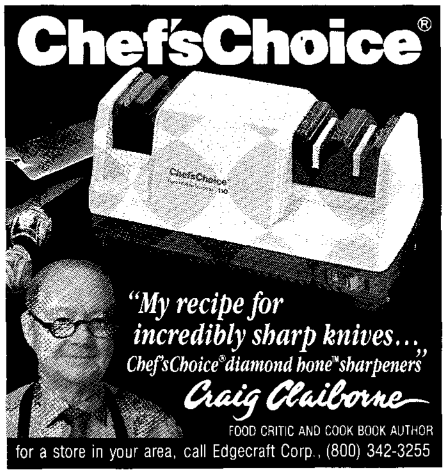
Mr. Albery's new "Dream," with sets and costumes by Antony McDonald, veers through all kinds of images and concepts: children's drawings, garish contemporary clothing, an abstract tubular forest, cutout moon and stars, doors that turn into beds. Again, the colors seem harsh: brownish and purplish tones mingled with more lurid hues, including a particular shade of green, which, for lack of a match on the color wheel, I am going to call NyQuil Milkshake. (You see such colors a lot these days in opera houses. Do directors sit down and try to look at them for as long as we have to?) Certain things were excellently done—for example, the antics of the Rustics, dressed not as workmen but as Brechtian petits bourgeois. Other things were goofy—the growth of the Athenian males' blond locks in Act II (they end up looking like Michael Bolton) and the abrupt change into ancient costume at the close. The Met's realistic sets for "Grimes" and "Billy Budd" are a better match for Britten. His deft, equivocal style tends to defeat directorial brainstorms.

And where the hysteria thesis at the center of Mr. Lamos's production has voluminous critical support, Mr. Albery's ends up making questionable claims on the text. The director lavishes attention on the relationship between Oberon and Puck (who is cast, according to custom, as a speaking part for a teen-ager); the idea is that the Quintish fairy king finds that Puck has grown too old for his taste and takes the Indian boy from Tytania as a replacement. So Puck sulks about, tingeing with resentment his responses to Oberon's commands. It's a provocative notion, bravely realized at the Met by the young actor Nick Stahl. But it has no payoff, since Puck must remain the exuberant engine of the plot, and not become one of its victims. (He is, after all, supernatural, whereas the Indian boy is human.) A sulky Puck is somehow one hapless character too many.

The singing in the performances I heard was generally strong. The City Opera cast, fine all around, centered on Lauren Flanigan's large-voiced, boldly acted Governess, while Robert Duerr drew smooth, agile playing from the orchestra. At the Met, Sylvia McNair managed the Purcellian turns in Tytania's part with silvery sweetness and pinpoint control. Jochen Kowalski was forcefully creepy in the countertenor role of Oberon, but was sometimes mushy in his diction. (I'd have preferred Brian Asawa, who sings gloriously opposite McNair on a new Philips recording of the opera.) Peter Rose brought down the house with his big-voiced, deadpan Bottom. David Atherton conducted swiftly and sensitively. The best news was that Britten's small-scale orchestration did not suffer in the Met's giant hall.

BY an interesting coincidence, the Juilliard Opera Center recently presented a work contemporaneous with and comparable to Britten's "Dream": Hans Werner Henze's "Elegy for Young Lovers." I can't do it justice here: it was a remarkable achievement by young Juilliard singers and players. But the libretto, by W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman, raises one last issue about Britten's character. Did Auden put a sliver of Britten into Gregor Mittenhofer, the august poet who treats his followers with sadism and disdain? After a close friendship, Auden was himself brutally "dropped" by Britten. Among the unpleasantnesses catalogued in Humphrey Carpenter's 1992 Britten biography, this scouring and cutting off of friends is more sinister than the unfulfilled longing for boys. "Flypaper" was one friend's word for the Aldeburgh world.

"A Midsummer Night's Dream" makes amends. It turns back from the frigid spaces of "Turn of the Screw," the perfection of Britten's capacity for terror. It touches unsettling chords but is ultimately a thing of vast beauty. It comes as close to Shakespeare as any opera ever written; the libretto, by Peter Pears and the composer, is straight from the source, iambic pentameter and all. Britten is very much present in it—but not, I think, as eerie Oberon. He's really Puck, half sweet and half savage. His world is one of grace and force, rigor and magic. Those who were hurt by him did not suffer for nothing. ♦



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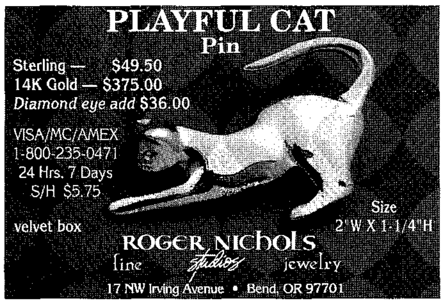

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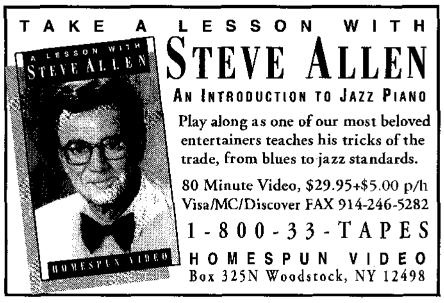

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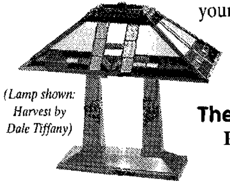

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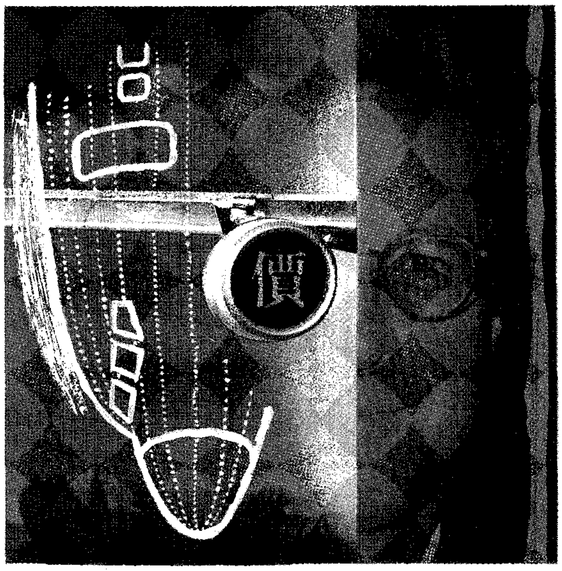
BOOKS

SCARE TACTICS

Michael Crichton invents a genre: the thriller as lobbyist.

BY JOHN LANCHESTER

When you go to bed with a new Michael Crichton, you can never be sure that you're going to respect yourself in the morning. In the course of his career, satisfying thrillers—"The Andromeda Strain," "A Case of Need," "Jurassic Park"—have alternated with outright turkeys ("Congo," "Sphere," "The Lost World"). You finish these novels feeling swindled and headachy, with that distinctive hangover caused by bingeing on popular fiction: you vow to fill in your Dostoyevski gaps, your Toni Morrison lacunae; you swear that the next time you read a zillion-selling mass-market author it will be Danielle Steel or Robert Ludlum, or someone else whose books never disappoint, because they are always the same.


Crichton: a conservative skepticism about institutional claims to knowledge.

GENE GREIF

The unevenness of Crichton's books is the more surprising given the consistency of their prose. As Clive James has definitively remarked, discussing Judith Krantz's "Princess Daisy," "to be a really lousy writer takes energy." Crichton doesn't have this kind of energy; his prose has an almost preternatural flatness. The energy level is not increased by the large chunks of pastiche technical writing present in almost all the books, from the phony acknowledgments and bibliography in "The Andromeda Strain" to this, from his new book, "Airframe" (Knopf; $26):

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But if Crichton uses the apparatus of the techno-thriller, it is always a means to an end—an unusual end for a writer of thrillers, since it is becoming increasingly apparent that he is, deep down, a moralist. Where his earlier work roamed through bacteria from outer space ("The Andromeda Strain"), or Viking history ("Eaters of the Dead"), or nineteenth-century England ("The Great Train Robbery"), not to mention his catalogue raisonné of the work of Jasper Johns, he now concentrates more and more on much debated issues of the day, which he picks up and turns into novels with a point of view and a moral. "Rising Sun," published in 1992, was about whether the Japanese were taking over the United States (the conclusion, which has dated slightly with the weakening of the Japanese economy: watch out, America); "Disclosure" was about sexual harassment (conclusion: women do it, too); "Jurassic Park" was about genetic engineering (conclusion: being a velociraptor means never having to say you're sorry). Actually, "Jurassic

Park” undermined its own minatory message, since it was in itself a successful piece of genetic engineering, with a plot cloned from Crichton’s brilliant first movie, “Westworld.” That film, which he wrote and directed, featured Yul Brynner as an out-of-control robot—a performance that gave us the “funny-looking foreign actor is actually an android” genre, which in turn gave us Arnold Schwarzenegger.

One of the dominant themes of Crichton’s work has been a conservative skepticism about institutional claims to knowledge—groups of people claiming to know what’s good for us. This first surfaced as skepticism about the claims of medicine. Crichton began writing in 1966, as a means of paying his way through Harvard Medical School. In his underrated memoir, “Travels” (1988), he describes his gradual disillusionment with medicine and his eventual abandonment of it after finishing med school. He now holds this unexpectedly Nietzschean belief: “We are directly responsible for any illness that happens to us.” The related idea that science claims to know more, and to be able to do more, than it actually can is a basic tenet all the way through Crichton’s work; the primal scene occurs as early as “The Andromeda Strain”—published in 1969, the year he abandoned medicine. The novel has a character called Leavitt, who has cooked up something called the Rule of 48. Crichton writes:

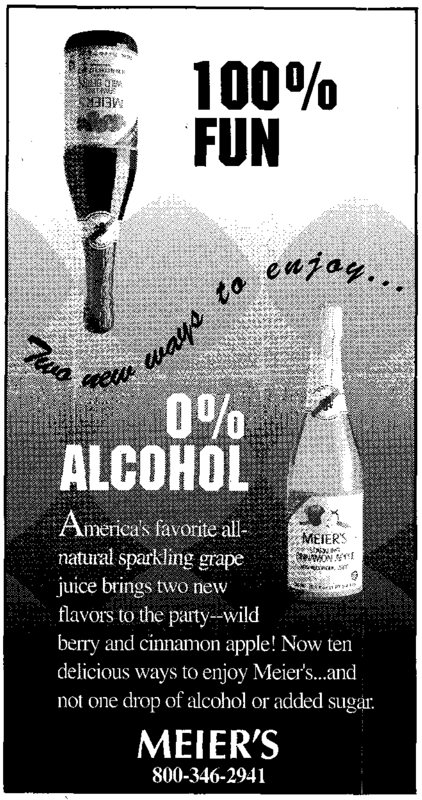
> For years it was stated that men had forty-eight chromosomes in their cells; there were pictures to prove it, and any number of careful studies. In 1953, a group of American researchers announced to the world that the human chromosome number was forty-six. Once more, there were pictures to prove it, and studies to confirm it. But these researchers also went back to reexamine the old pictures, and the old studies—and found only forty-six chromosomes, not forty-eight.
>
> Leavitt’s Rule of 48 said simply, “All Scientists Are Blind.”

On this point Crichton has stuck to his guns. He has maintained an interest in—indeed, an obsession with—the way in which people can be plain wrong. Sixteen years and nine novels later, in “The Lost World,” Crichton has Sarah Harding, a glamorous thirty-something biologist, telling her young protégée, Kelly, about the work of the zoologist George Schaller:

> “Before he goes into the field, George reads everything that’s ever been written about the animal he’s going to study. Popular books, newspaper accounts, scientific papers, everything. Then he goes out and observes the animal for himself. And you know what he usually finds?”
>
> She shook her head, not trusting herself to speak.
>
> “That nearly everything that’s been written or said is wrong. Like the gorilla. George studied mountain gorillas ten years before Dian Fossey ever thought of it. And he found that what was believed about gorillas was exaggerated, or misunderstood, or just plain fantasy—like the idea that you couldn’t take women on gorilla expeditions, because the gorillas would rape them. Everything . . . just . . . wrong.”

“Airframe” takes up this theme: it is in large part a study of how people come to be, in Sarah Harding’s words, “stuffed full of misinformation.” The culpable institution in this case is the mass media; the good guys are the people who build the planes. (Though Crichton has his doubts about science, he likes technology.) The novel opens thirty-seven thousand feet over the Pacific, when a Norton Aircraft N-22 widebody, operated by TransPacific Airlines, en route to Los Angeles from Hong Kong, suddenly goes into a violent diving-and-climbing maneuver, which leaves three people dead and fifty-six injured. Our heroine, a thirty-six-year-old divorced mom named Casey Singleton, works as a vice-president for Quality Assurance at Norton Aircraft in its Burbank headquarters. “With her short dark hair, she was appealing in a tomboyish sort of way—long-limbed and athletic.” Casey is assigned the task of dealing with the media in relation to the TransPacific Airlines incident, which comes at a difficult time for the company: Norton is on the point of clinching a major sale of N-22s to China. To make things worse, Casey has just been assigned a dorky new assistant, Bob Richman—though his irritatingness to her is happily balanced by his usefulness as a plot device, since Casey gets to do quite a lot of patient explaining (“The widebody has one million parts and a span time of seventy-five days”).

The cause of the plane’s problems is pretty soon apparent: it underwent a slats deploy—a slat being a device at the front of the wing which parallels the flap at the back. Was this an “uncommanded slats deploy,” a problem that the N-22 had suffered from in the past but which was now supposed to have been fixed? And why did TransPaci-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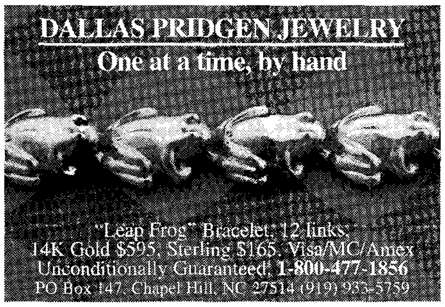
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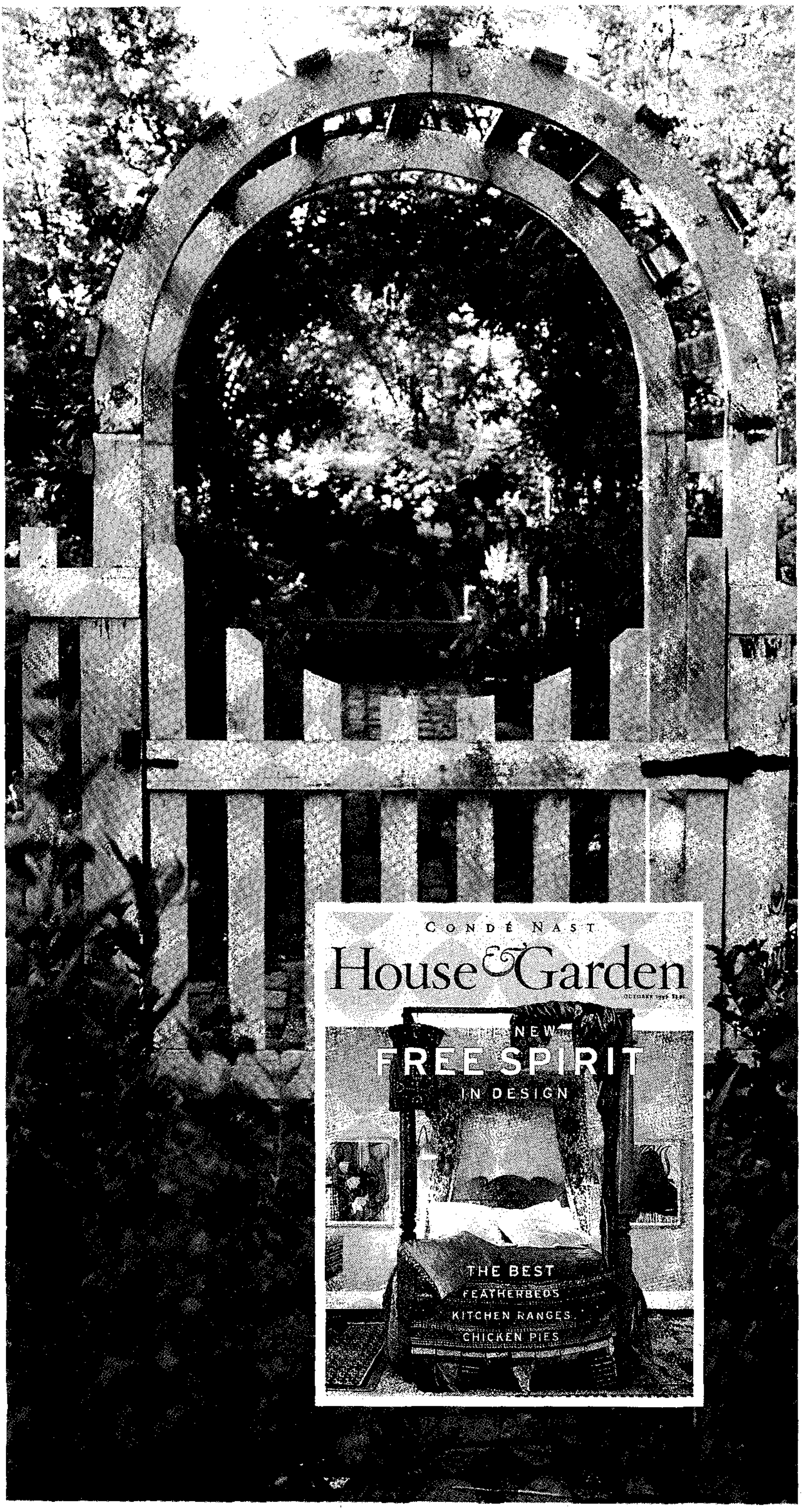

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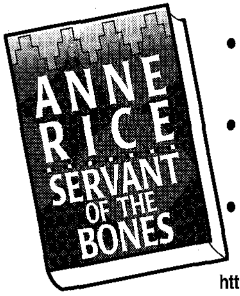

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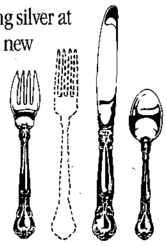

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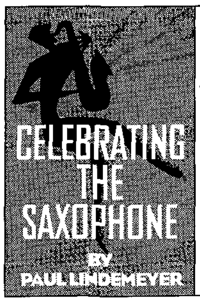

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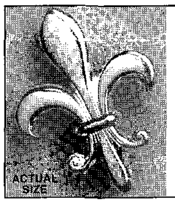

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fic's top aviator, the legendary John Chang, apparently override the automatic pilot, which would have kept the plane flying level and safe? And is Bob Richman just a clueless dweeb or is he something more sinister?

All these problems are hugely compounded when twenty-nine-year-old Jennifer Malone, "the youngest segment producer in the history of *Newsline*," suddenly needs to find an item to replace a botched interview with Al Pacino. She sees a P.R. release from one of Norton's competitors about the N-22's difficulties, and hits on the idea of making a film about the plane. The idea solidifies when she sees some horrific footage from a video camera of a passenger on the TransPacific flight. She convinces herself that the N-22 (which we readers know has an exemplary safety record) is unsafe and that Norton is trying to cover up the truth. The "Newsline" segment—"a conflict between good and bad, a morality story"—starts to take shape:

> But because the story also had to unfold quickly, this morality tale had to hang from a series of hooks that did not need to be explained. Things the audience already knew to be true. They already knew big corporations were corrupt, their leaders greedy sexist pigs. You didn't have to prove that; you just had to mention it. They already knew that government bureaucracies were inept and lazy. You didn't have to prove that, either. And they already knew that products were cynically manufactured with no concern for consumer safety.
>
> From such agreed-upon elements, she must construct her morality story.

A little on the sanctimonious side, this, but it has the ring of truth. As the story unfolds, we are given a picture of the way "Newsline"—and, by extension, TV news in general—systematically dumbs down the stories it tells. "Airframe" seeks to demonstrate the truth of one of its epigraphs, by the "veteran reporter John Lawton, 68": "The irony of the Information Age is that it has given new respectability to uninformed opinion." A bracing moral for a book with a first print run of two million copies.

As to whether our heroine manages to outwit the bad guys, find the truth about TransPacific Flight 545, save the China deal, be promoted, and get played in a movie by, say, Holly Hunter—well, you'll just have to cough up your twenty-six bucks like everybody else. If you do, you'll end up knowing a lot more about airplanes, much of it comforting, and a lot more about the F.A.A., much of it very uncomforting indeed. Take the famous "black box," the flight-data recorder: all planes have to carry them, but the F.A.A. doesn't mandate that they be checked before each flight, and therefore they often don't work. "Airframe" paints a grim portrait of the state of American aviation. The wily old engineer Amos says:

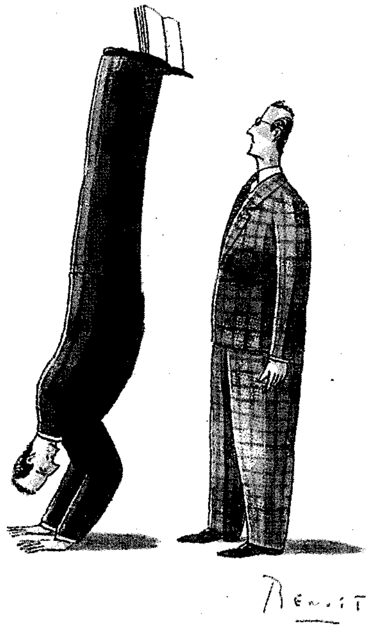
> "These days, everybody seems to believe in Santa Claus . . . they believe in something for nothing. You know: government deregulates the airlines, and everybody cheers. But the carriers have to cut costs. So the food is awful. That's okay. There are fewer direct flights, more hubs. That's okay. The planes look grubby, because they redo the interiors less often. That's okay. But still the carriers have to cut more costs. So they run the planes longer, buy fewer new ones. The fleet ages. That'll be okay—for a while. . . . And the public doesn't care, because for thirty years this country's had the best aviation safety record in the world. But the thing is, we *paid* for it. . . ."
>
> "So where's it going to end?" she said.
>
> "I got a hundred bucks," he said, "they'll reregulate within ten years. There'll be a string of crashes, and they'll do it."

Which, if Crichton's track record as a chooser of hot subjects is anything to go by, means that planes are going to start dropping out of the American skies.

"Airframe" is one of Crichton's satisfying thrillers, his best since "Jurassic Park," six years and four books ago Perhaps now we can attempt an interim verdict on his œuvre. Marxists would probably say that Crichton is not so much a writer as a site of cultural production. Look at his movies his TV show "E.R.," the Jasper Johns catalogue, the rumored ten-million-dollar movie sale of "Airframe," the New Age hokum in "Travels" ("One day Gary suggested I try astral travel. 'Why not?' I said"): this isn't a man, it's a medium-sized corporation, embodying the Zeitgeist, helping to create it, and capitalizing on it, all at the same time. But there are other ways of describing Crichton After all, not many books deliberately aimed at the top of the best-seller list will contain a bald plea for increased federal regulation. His in-tuneness with the present is unfaked and unforced; he can't help it. "When I first began to channel," Crichton wrote in "Travels," "I wondered why it was so easy for me, and I suspected that it had some similarity to the state I am in when writing." Well, yes. ◆

BOOKS FROM OUR PAGES

A year-end roundup of books that originally appeared, in whole or in part, in The New Yorker.



THE RUN OF HIS LIFE: THE PEOPLE V. O. J. SIMPSON, by Jeffrey Toobin (Random House; $25). How do you write about one of the most written-about events of our time? In this thoroughly researched narrative, Toobin effectively retries not only O. J. Simpson but also the prosecution, the defense, the jury, the judge, and his fellow-reporters. Ultimately, he passes judgment on a society so obsessed with race that an open-and-shut murder trial can become a racial referendum.

COLLECTED STORIES, by Mavis Gallant (Random House; $45). For more than forty-five years, Gallant tells us, she has "lived in writing, like a spoonful of water in a river," and here are fifty-two of her finest stories. Her work is marked by a Flaubertian elegance and didacticism, yet this sense of authority can suddenly give way, dispelling the reader's presumptions. In the end, most of Gallant's characters remain inscrutable to one another—"not puzzles but problems set in code, no two of which ever matched."

MESSAGES FROM MY FATHER, by Calvin Trillin (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $18). Abe Trillin, who came from Kiev to Missouri via the unlikely port of Galveston, was what his son calls a "farm-club" Jew: part hardboiled Harry Truman, part pinochle-playing, Yiddish-speaking grocer. This memoir is a charming vindication of Abe's American dream: the author, who landed at Yale and went on to the Jewish major leagues—New York City, that is—turned out just the way his father planned.

SO FORTH, by Joseph Brodsky (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $18). It seems particularly unfair that Brodsky, who died last January, will not live

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to see the year 2000, since he is perhaps the most ironically millennial of our century's poets. Here, in poems like "A Footnote to Weather Forecasts" and "Taps" ("soon, I'm told, I'll lose my epaulets altogether / and dwindle into a little star"), he flaunts the distinctive black-humorous rhetoric—at once doomful and comforting—that will live well beyond him. As he puts it in one poem, "The eye tracks the sinking soap, though it's the foam that's famous."

CITIZEN K, by Mark Singer (Knopf; $25). In 1988, Brett Kimberlin—an accomplished teen-age pilot and multi-ton pot smuggler serving his sentence as the notorious Speedway Bomber—was prevented by federal prison authorities from giving an Election Week press conference. Did Kimberlin, as he claimed, once sell nickel bags to Danny Quayle at a Burger Chef in Indianapolis? Singer's tenaciously reported story of this Jarndycean litigant, would-be pop star, and self-styled "conscience of the country" draws the reader—and the author himself—into a hopeless and often hilarious labyrinth of semi-truths.

LIGHT FANTASTIC, by John Lahr (Dial; $23.95). Lahr has been not only a critic but a historian, a reporter, and a wide-eyed enthusiast in his treatment of the theatre over the last four years—a period that saw the return of Edward Albee, with "Three Tall Women" (a "Cubist stage picture" of the author's mother); the marathon comfort of Tony Kushner's "Angels in America"; and the arrival of the "tap messenger" Savion Glover, in whose "Bring In da Noise, Bring In da Funk" Lahr sees Broadway's original vernacular energy both honored and rekindled.

THE POLITICS OF MEMORY: LOOKING FOR GERMANY IN THE NEW GERMANY, by Jane Kramer (Random House; $27.50). An East German dissident finds out that his best friend was a Stasi spy; a Turkish worker is brutalized by skinheads; a couple in Kreuzberg closes their chic restaurant after a visit from feces-toting anarchists. What do these incidents mean in the "new" Germany? As Berliners quarrelling over their Holocaust memorial understand all too clearly, the packaging of the past can be synonymous with the shaping of the future.

DUCHAMP, by Calvin Tomkins (Holt; $35). Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) was a mischief-maker. He not only created such "ready-mades" as the "Bicycle Wheel" but, as Tomkins observes, "pulled off the supreme Dada gesture" by drawing a rakish mustache and goatee on a postcard of the Mona Lisa. In reading this magisterial and often very funny biography, one comes to see Duchamp as the spiritual ancestor of Pop art. Even today, works like "Étant Donnés" seem eerily prophetic.

THE ARCHITECT OF DESIRE, by Suzannah Lessard (Dial; $24.95). The author, a great-granddaughter of the scandalous Gilded Age architect Stanford White, grew up in one of the houses surrounding Box Hill, the enchanted family manse. As she uncovers the beauty and the tragic compulsions in the family structures (whether still standing or destroyed), she builds an irrefutable—and exquisitely rendered—argument for the consequence of aesthetic sensibility and the century-long shadow it can cast.

AFTER RAIN, by William Trevor (Viking; $22.95). Life bites down hard on Trevor's characters, who tend to be people of modest means and limited maneuverability (a widow, a blind piano tuner, a potato dealer): they take small moral or emotional gambles and suffer disproportionate losses. But the stranglehold of circumstance in their lives is often accompanied by a surprising breadth of vision, and occasionally—as in the title story—a moment of grace.

THE SIZE OF THOUGHTS: ESSAYS AND OTHER LUMBER, by Nicholson Baker (Random House; $25). Baker is to the essay what Fabergé was to eggs; and the most mundane objects arrest his attention. He celebrates the "can-do metallic snap" of nail clippers, which "leaves their user with the illusion that he is progressively, clip by hardened-steel clip, gaining control of his shambling life." Even the humble card catalogue can become a casus belli, as in an incendiary polemic against high-tech librarianism.

ANTS ON THE MELON, by Virginia Hamilton Adair (Random House; $21). The eighty-three-year-old poet was recently rediscovered, after decades of writing in obscurity, and her first collection spans a candidly observed life. Burning rubber in "Driving Westward," Adair writes, "Age, grief, perversities / of lovers and investments / vanish in the exhalation of our speed," and this expresses the essence of her poems, which, whether she's describing her husband's suicide or a gnat crushed on her bedsheet, balance immediate griefs with a sense of what is beyond them.

THE MAN WHO GREW TWO BREASTS, AND OTHER TRUE TALES OF MEDICAL DETECTION, by Berton Roueché (Plume; $10.95). Nobody could figure out what caused Harry Lee Patterson to start growing breasts until his endocrinologist—after considering and rejecting a variety of culprits—found out that Patterson's wife used a vaginal cream containing estrogen. The late Berton Roueché had a gift for letting complicated medical mysteries unfold as naturally as a fisherman's tale. He reminds us that medicine, like narrative, is a process of discovery, and usually requires an imaginative leap.

THE WOMEN, by Hilton Als (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $21). One of the women under scrutiny in this provocative meditation on racial and sexual identity is the author's Barbadian mother, Marie, a self-described Negress who worked hard, loved badly, raised six children alone, and never talked about any of it. Another is Dorothy Dean, who called herself "a white faggot trapped in a black woman's body," and became the acid-tongued mascot of gay New York in the sixties and seventies. Als, who acknowledges his own flirtations with hosiery and masochism, examines both the poverty and the richness of his subjects' choices.

ELEPHANT ROCKS, by Kay Ryan (Grove; $18). Chief among the many satisfying elements of Ryan's rigorous poetics are her Dickinsonian affinity for off rhymes and her playful sense of an ending. Here is the poem "Intention" in full: "Intention doesn't sweeten. / It should be picked young / and eaten. Sometimes only hours / separate the cotyledon / from the wooden plant. / Then if you want to eat it, / you can't."

THE DEVIL PROBLEM AND OTHER TRUE STORIES, by David Remnick (Random House; $25.95). In this collection, an ambitious fraternity of politicians, athletes, newspapermen, and writers clamor for the reader's attention. Sometimes Remnick reports on a skirmish between identifiable opponents—a maiming in Belfast, say, or a Hollywood lawsuit over "Hamlet"—but often his restless subjects (Michael Jordan, Gary Hart) turn out to be shadowboxing with some earlier version of themselves. It is Elaine Pagels, however, a professor of religion at Princeton and the subject of the title essay, who takes on the most formidable opponent.

AMERICAN MUSICIANS II, by Whitney Balliett (Oxford; $39.95). If Kerouac and the Beats wanted us to believe that jazz musicians are wailing modern primitives trapped inside their volcanic passions, Balliett's seventy-odd jazz portraits are demythologizing. In this expanded edition of an earlier classic, he allows his subjects—from King Oliver to Ornette Coleman—to be intelligent and perceptive in plainspoken language that expresses no less than their best solos.

ORNAMENT AND SILENCE: ESSAYS ON WOMEN'S LIVES, by Kennedy Fraser (Knopf; $25). The author recalls that she began her writing career as "an attractive young thing" under the wing of this or that paternal mentor. Her new collection is the fruit of her realization, in midlife, that "the time had come to develop other resources." From the indefatigable British naturalist Miriam Rothschild to the designer Valentina, who dressed for the opera as if she were the main event, the women introduced here struggle to remain "in the center of their lives," and their example has helped Fraser to do the same.

WALKING THE BLACK CAT, by Charles Simic (Harcourt; $24). The padlocked window of a pawnshop, a woman with the stem of a red rose between her teeth, a blood orange falling off a table with an ominous thud: Simic's poems are crowded with uncanny presences, which he challenges with flirtatious directness. "Sing," he exhorts the canary that mutely watches him make love to a woman in one poem. "Flutter your wings / As if you were applauding, / Or I'll throw her black slip / Over your gilded cage."

JESSE: THE LIFE AND PILGRIMAGE OF JESSE JACKSON, by Marshall Frady (Random House; $28.50). George Bush once called Jesse Jackson "a Chicago hustler." Andrew Young has called him "the moral voice of our time." In resolving that contradiction, Frady illuminates the racial divide that has rent us since the days of slavery. Along the way, it becomes clear that Jackson's noble failure to become the next Martin Luther King, Jr., resulted not so much from the grandiosity of his aspiration as from his inability to countenance the meaner sentiments of our time, including racial separatism.

THE FAMILY MARKOWITZ, by Allegra Goodman (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $22). Among the principals in the Markowitz family—elderly Rose, who complains constantly despite her cozy addiction to Percodan; her son Henry, the manager of Laura Ashley in Oxford; and her son Ed, a Middle East expert who finds Muslim terrorists far less trying than his own relatives—it is a point of honor to misunderstand one another. How could Henry be getting married when he's gay? How could Ma be moving in when she was only invited for a short visit? Throughout these stories, familial exasperation is the comforting axis around which all else turns.

GOLF DREAMS, by John Updike (Knopf; $23). Updike came to golf relatively late in life, and not by way of the country club but through such writers as Bernard Darwin and Herbert Warren Wind. These literary lessons did nothing for his game, apparently—he still struggles to break 90—but, as the parodies, stories, and commentaries collected here demonstrate, he is a wry and eloquent observer of the sport and of his own "swing thoughts": those flashes of midstroke self-consciousness which make golf so pleasing and so impossible.

SELECTED STORIES, by Alice Munro (Knopf; $30). In a stunning feat of cultural reversal, Munro has for the last twenty-five years or so been quietly moving the headquarters of the short story, that quintessentially American form, to the provincial towns and hardscrabble bush country of her native Ontario. Her work is boundaryless, though, and its themes are the classic ones: the sorrows of love; the difficulty, especially for women, of forging a self; the upwelling urge to violence in man and nature alike; and the narrative tricks played by history. The only thing Canadian about these twenty-eight stories is their economy and their seeming modesty: many of them are novels in miniature.

GREAT BOOKS, by David Denby (Simon & Schuster; $30). In the fall of 1991, Denby, who was going through a movie critic's version of a midlife crisis (he was so hooked on fast-food media that he was unable to read a book from start to finish), returned to his alma mater, Columbia, to retake the spectacularly un-p.c. "core curriculum." By the end of the year—what with Homer's marriage of bloodshed and nobility, Boccaccio's enlightened heroines, and Conrad's prideful, almost malevolent modernism—Denby and his classmates had discovered the stable instability of the classics, which, he writes, "are less a conquering army than a kingdom of untamable beasts, at war with one another and with readers."

CROSS CHANNEL, by Julian Barnes (Knopf; $21). In his first collection of stories Barnes again proves that there will always be an England, but, equally at home in pub and *petit zinc*, he admits that there must be a France, too. These ten tales range from the seventeenth century to the twenty-first (including an amusing stop in 1928, when a daffy, Bertie Woosterish uncle gets himself mixed up with the Surrealists), and they all probe the wary entanglement of *les Rosbifs* and Mossoo Frog—two cultures that can't seem to get out of each other's *cheveux*.

E-MAIL.THIS.BOOK!, by The Cartoon Bank (Knopf; $17). "On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog" and ninety-nine other cartoons on computer topics, mostly by *New Yorker* artists. There's a CD-ROM disk included, and the promise of twenty-five thousand more cartoons somewhere in cyberspace.

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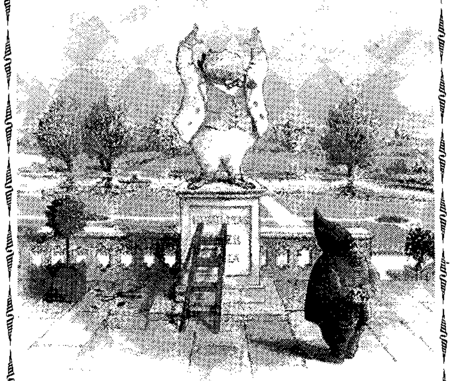

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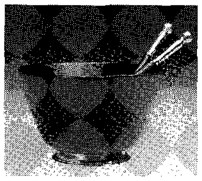

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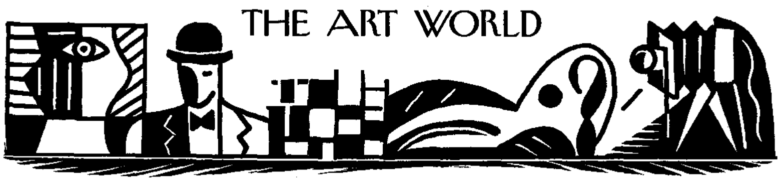


THE TRELLIS AND THE ROSE

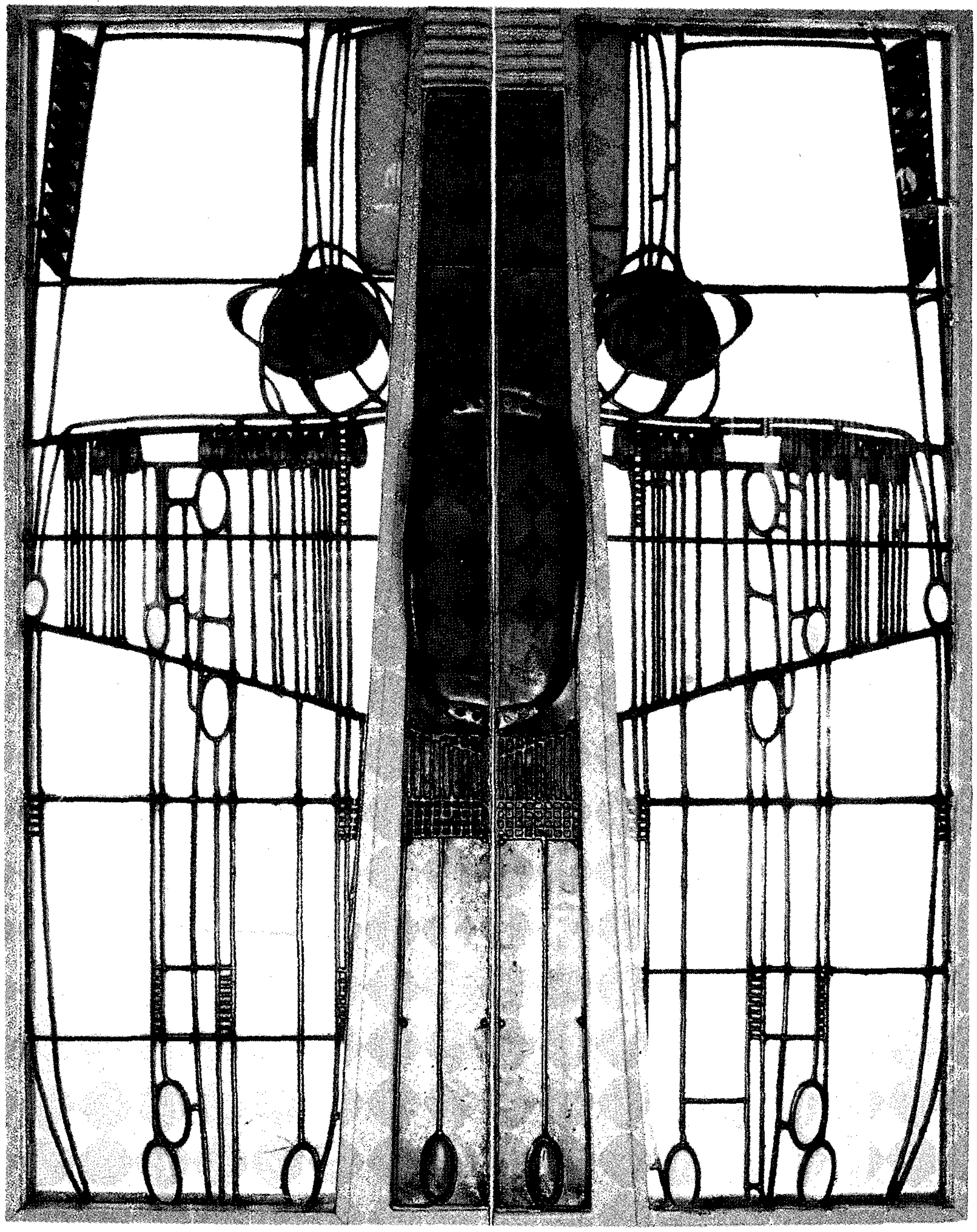
A celestial marriage of opposites in grimy Glasgow.

BY SIMON SCHAMA

AT one point in the Met's handsome Charles Rennie Mackintosh exhibition, the Aesthetic Movement meets up with the kipper. The setting is Kate Cranston's Ingram Street Ladies' Luncheon Room, carefully reassembled for this show, where customers wolfed down fried whiting and Dundee cake beneath murals of haloed, blossom-bedecked maidens. Glasgow grime was screened out by panelling painted silvery white and inset with peridot-green glass panes, which were decorated with stylized patterns of trees and plants. Tucked beneath the mezzanine stairs was a cashier's booth, delicately arched—a fairy grotto in the tearoom. And if the full improbability of the scene fails to strike home it's only because this creamy space has been made over as a decorous museum installation, complete with excessively Manhattan designer touches, like white roses for each table. White roses? Glasgow? A halfpenny a cup? I don't think so. What's missing here is the kind of audio-olfactory enhancement undreamed of even by the Met: the hum and burr of sardonic Glasgow chatter; the smells of industrial-strength tea and fried everything; the grease and the gossip. A hint of this would have made the case for Mackintosh magic still more compelling, because his designs always sought to marry the domestic and the fantastic, the homely and the exotic. A born showman, Mackintosh would have been happy, one suspects, with Lutyens' recollection of a tearoom that Mackintosh decorated as "gorgeous . . . a wee bit vulgar . . . all just a little *outré*."

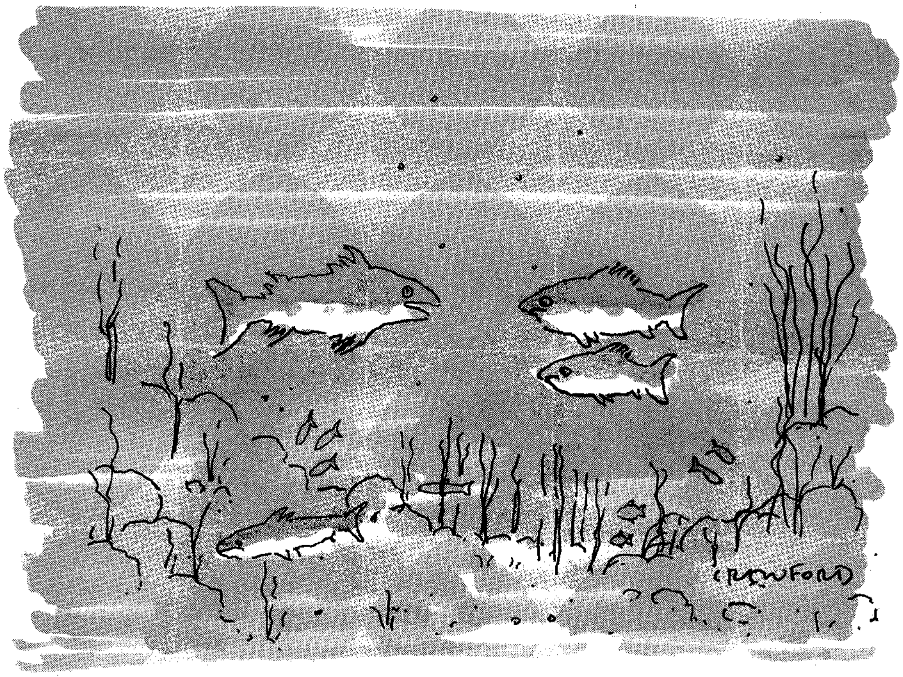
The flamboyantly ornamental aspects of Mackintosh's personality have not much embarrassed those who have adopted him as a misunderstood patriarch of modernism. As early as 1924, Charles Marriott, in "Modern English Architecture," set the tone by claiming that since European modernists had been influenced by Mackintosh's displays (all carefully labelled *Scottish*, not English) at the Vienna Secession, in 1900, and at the Turin Exhibition, in 1902, "it is hardly too much to say that the whole modernist movement in European architecture derives from him." Nikolaus Pevsner, in "Pioneers of the Modern Movement" (1936), celebrated the grids and lattices of Mackintosh's furniture and the strong angularity of his architecture as authentically proto-modernist, while dismissing as an irrelevant remnant of his immaturity the symbolist decoration and undulating details with which they continued to be embellished. An alternative school of thought argues that Mackintosh is more properly understood as a late Romantic—a true disciple of Ruskin—committed to inscribing the forms of nature on the handiwork of man. His watercolors and those of his wife and collaborator, Margaret Macdonald, in which cabbages are rendered as faintly tinted globules and trees as slender green columns (rather like Theosophically overgrown leeks), do indeed suggest a couple dreamily entwined in the tendrils of the botanical life force. But this battle between the champions of the right angle and the advocates of the bounding curve remains strictly a contest of interpreters. For Mackintosh and Macdonald themselves, it was axiomatic that the trellis and the rose needed each other. Strength without beauty, they might have said, was brute structure, and beauty without strength idle whimsy. How to marry the two without lapsing into either sentimentality or crude functionalism was the task they set themselves for most of their lives.

PART of Mackintosh's enduring appeal is precisely his refusal to be enlisted in any particular camp in the modernist wars. "I care not the least for theories, for this or that dogma," he wrote in a lecture entitled "Seemliness," and stated, "Go alone: crawl-stumble-stagger—but go alone." While Mackintosh worked together with his wife, her sister Frances, and Frances's husband, Herbert McNair, he showed no interest at all in establishing anything like the "schools" that attracted a student following in Continental Europe. Though he was influenced by the English Arts and Crafts movement, and as a student probably heard William Morris and Walter Crane lecture at the Glasgow School of Art, he was too much of a true Glaswegian to share their aversion to industrial society, not to mention their goal of reinstating cottage handicrafts. It's impossible to imagine Morris, for example, recognizing plastic as a rich material for decorative inlay, as Mackintosh did. The closest Mackintosh ever came to a true Arts and Crafts piece of furniture was an ostensibly simple and sturdy chair made around 1900 for William Davidson's house, Windyhill. But if its rush seat is meant to announce rustic unostentatiousness the effect is completely undone by a solid, tapered back that projects more than four feet from the base—a rude sit-you-down grandly elongated into something fit for a thane.



The prose of structure and the poetry of decorated surface: a set of Mackintosh's doors for the Willow Tea Rooms.

Mackintosh's origins were distinctly unthanelike. Born in 1868, the son of a clerk in the Glasgow police force, he showed enough early talent to be enrolled at the age of fifteen in the Glasgow School of Art, where the headmaster, Francis Newbery, was on a mission to expose his students to the most progressive trends in European art and architecture. But Honeyman & Keppie, the architectural firm that Mackintosh joined when he was twenty, was, like much of Victorian Scotland, caught between the competing demands of history and technology. The firm was required to service the grandiose needs of an imperial metropolis which was the densest, grittiest concentration of industrial power in



"It's been over for a while now. I caught him trying to fertilize some catfish eggs in June."

• •

Britain. So, despite Newbery's enthusiasm for the simple honesties of Arts and Crafts, his pupil's early designs veer between Beaux-Arts bombast and Italian-Gothic exhibitionism.

In 1893, Mackintosh and his friend Herbert McNair fell in with Margaret and Frances Macdonald, and all their lives changed dramatically, and for good. Henceforth they were known as "the Four" (or, to unreceptive critics, as "the Spook School"), and turned out posters, magazine illustrations, and furniture, all of which attempted to bring the new "Glasgow Style" before a suspicious public. The manner was Caledonian nouveau, in which the slogans of purity and truth were supported by pairs of willow-women arching toward each other with swan necks and cushion lips, or else posed frontally, with their enlarged doe eyes issuing sensual challenges to the porridge-clogged bourgeoisie. Frances Macdonald's stunningly beautiful mirror, where Glasgow metal (in this case, beaten tin) has been worked into an undulating liquid form, is a perfect example of the Four's audacity. Conceived as a paradoxical anti-vanity, the mirror is called "Honesty"—the familiar name for the plant *lunaria*, whose ovary-like seed pods supply the decorative motif at its top, and for the anti-cosmetic Glaswegian candor that was supposed to flow into the faces framed by its art.

It must have been this reputation for artfully contrived artlessness that won Mackintosh and his friends the commissions to decorate Kate Cranston's tearooms. Their owner, who was the sister of a loose-tea retailer, aimed to provide middle-class Glaswegians with a therapeutic alternative to the rows of pubs and bars from which hordes of reeking drunks issued day and night. The look was meant to differ from that of the London tearooms, where Joe Lyons had supplied Frenchified marble-top tables and ooh-la-la waitresses, as well as from Glasgow's own dark-panelled, exclusively masculine dining clubs, with their brownish aroma of pipe tobacco and decomposing grouse.

MUCH has been made of the whiteness and brightness of Mackintosh's tearooms—the antidote to Glasgow's soot and smoke. But his real genius lay in the canny subdivision of their interiors into discrete chambers, each with its own cultural and visual atmosphere. At the Willow Tea Rooms, on Sauchiehall Street, a brilliantly light front room, meant primarily for ladies, was divided from a darker, tweedier dining room at the rear, by the extraordinary chair—virtually a shogun's throne—that has be-

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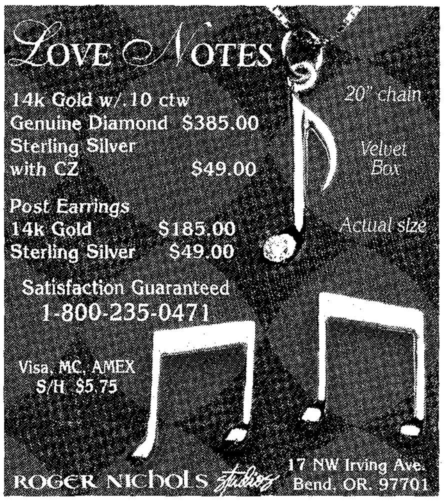
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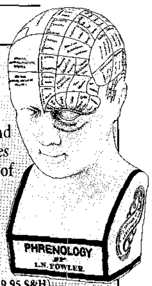
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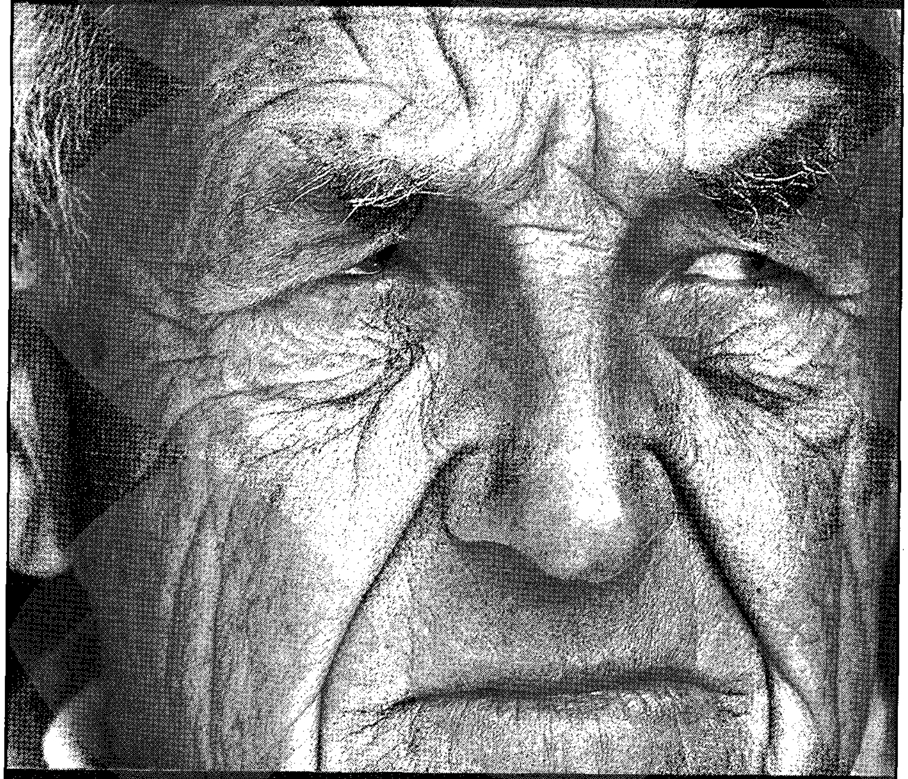
come the best known of all Mackintosh's furniture pieces. A boundary between female and male zones, it was a typical product of the Four's inventive androgyny: the strong, fretted lines that make up its back converge into a great fountain spray that could be read as the trunk and overhang of a willow (an allusion to Sauchiehall's Celtic etymology as "a boggy place full of willows"). Upstairs, the double doors to the Salon de Luxe offer a similar marriage between the prose of structure and the poetry of decorated surface. The handles of both doors are set in panels of beaten steel that taper upward to rectangles of purple ceramic, and below the handles the panels are stamped with an early version of Mackintosh's portcullis-like grid, from which two single drops of glass are suspended. Each door features a stylized giant rose above a cascade of vertical leaded lines, and when both doors are closed these intricately webbed patterns seem to resolve themselves into forms that are at once botanical, zoological, and mythical: a lepidopterous angel, wings extended, beckons customers into a celestial realm of bloater paste and scones.

By the time Mackintosh had completed the Sauchiehall Street rooms, in 1903, he had become well known (if not exactly universally acclaimed) both in Scotland and in Europe. In 1902, Hermann Muthesius had published an article in *Dekorative Kunst* that sang Mackintosh's praises as the exemplar of a radically new art—one that treated the design of interiors as a total tactile and visual experience, a *Gesamtkunstwerk.* But where Mackintosh differs from his counterparts—designers like Morris, whose firm integrated textile, furniture, and architecture by using motifs from nature, and early moderns like Josef Hoffmann, who did the same with stripped-down geometric designs—is in his resistance to the doctrine of unity. He didn't assume that the exterior of a house must articulate its interior, or even that the several sub-interiors must all be imprinted with an identical concept and style. While many of his signature motifs—the rose petals and the portcullises—are repeated throughout a house, they appear in subtly altered combinations, colors, and materials, which differentiate darker, ostensibly more masculine rooms from softer, more inviting places. Though they are superficially a gender theorist's dream,

ANDREW WYETH
A SECRET LIFE



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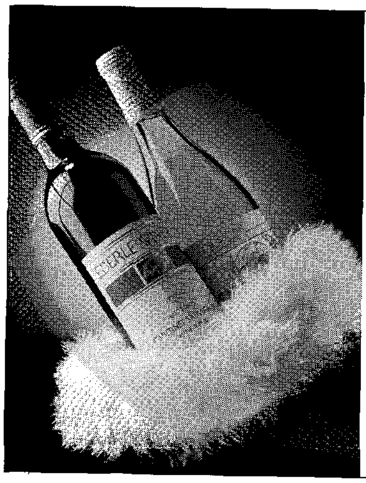

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Mackintosh was actually at pains to complicate and mingle these separate zones. For example, the gridded doors to the panelled library of the Hill House, built for the publisher Walter Blackie, are decorated with delicate damson-colored glass insets. Similarly, a set of tall ladder-back chairs, placed at strategic points in a dazzling white bedroom, supply punctuation and anchorage, so that its occupants would not altogether drift away in what John McKean, in an entertaining catalogue essay on the Hill House, calls the "ivory mist" of the room's atmosphere.

Visitors to the Met who want to experience these subtle effects will have to content themselves with the videos that walk (a little too hastily) through that stunning house, and through other interiors, like the Glasgow School of Art and the Scotland Street School. When individual items of furniture are isolated from their minutely thought-out settings, they sometimes seem more like prodigies of craft than like interdependent works of art. Occasionally, though, they are so jaw-droppingly beautiful that they transcend their function altogether. Nothing symbolizes Mackintosh's genius for marrying strength to grace better than his clocks—the embodiment of the Scottish Presbyterian passion for strict timeliness. But at the Willow Tea Rooms, in contravention of the discipline, time was meant to be idled. So Mackintosh built a grandfather clock with a polished steel face and a gridded oak case—pure Glasgow engineering—and then attached two wing panels filled with glass the hue of Highland heather.

TIME, however, turned out not to be on Mackintosh's side. Caught on the cultural cusp between Art Nouveau and geometric modernism, his exteriors often seemed too traditional for the avant-garde and his interiors too radically startling for the sweetness-and-light crowd. Mournful legends have attached themselves to the long years of his decline, during which he was ignored in Britain and acclaimed, at a distance, in Central Europe. The truth, however, as many of the catalogue authors point out, is more complicated and, if anything, sadder. Mackintosh continued to have some enthusiasts in Glasgow but certainly provoked as much criticism as praise in Vienna. While he was still in his mid-forties, Blackie reported him to be downcast because "only a very few saw merit in his work and the many passed him by." Inevitably, Mackintosh's well of inspiration, along with his bank account, diminished with every slight, imagined or real. And his sense of increasing isolation was given farcical immediacy during the First World War, after he and Margaret Macdonald had moved to the Suffolk fishing village of Walberswick. There the couple contented themselves with sketching plants and flowers, the more anthropomorphic the better. In 1915, at the height of the anti-German hysteria in Britain, rumors circulated that the artsy Scottish gentleman had had extensive dealings with the Hun. Letters were discovered in his house which indeed seemed to originate in the empires of the two Kaisers—evidence enough for the village Kitcheners and Haigs that they had an enemy agent in their midst. Ordered to leave the East Anglian counties forthwith, Mackintosh and Macdonald ended up in the more bohemian milieu of Chelsea, where they scraped along by creating brilliantly colored abstract textile designs. Occasional commissions still came Mackintosh's way, and his sketches for a group of studios in Chelsea, with steeply pitched gables and gridded windows, make it clear that his old sharpness had not altogether disappeared. But this, like many other projects, never was built.

Mackintosh's last years were spent in southern France, mostly in the coastal town of Port-Vendres. Even in this remote retreat, his inspired peculiarity did not quite desert him. The watercolor landscapes of his last years are fantastic manipulations of scale and perspective: cliffs and hills abruptly tilted as if in geological upheaval; cubist houses scrambled together in a manner owing less to Cézanne than to memories of fivestones thrown over a Glasgow playground. Their air of expressive agitation, like everything Mackintosh did, renders moot all easy distinctions between ancient and modern, Old Guard and vanguard.

"In our country, he would have been Frank Lloyd Wright," the design historian Alan Crawford once overheard a well-meaning American enthusiast exclaim. And it is tempting to see Mackintosh's vertically driven architecture and furniture as Wright horizontals turned on end: the lofty Scot peering down at the short Welsh-American. Both men were committed to synthesizing the natural and the built environments, but Wright's creative imagination was fed by the expansive American landscape, while Mackintosh's was a response to the narrower gauge of industrial, urban Scotland. And, though Mackintosh began his career in an explosion of inventiveness, he ultimately exhausted the ebullient self-confidence that Wright had in boundless reserve. In his strongest buildings Mackintosh did succeed in creating works for the ages. But it is sometimes his simplest pieces that bear the clearest mark of his phenomenal originality. Look in the vitrine uninvitingly captioned "Cutlery," for example, and you will find a fish knife whose body is formed, like those of the nymphs in the tearoom murals, as a slender, elongated cylinder, tapering to a blade shaped like a tulip. However posterity may judge its creator, it's safe to say that no one ever designed a more perfect place of repose for a flake of haddock. ♦

LA VIE BOHÈME

In a two-part, eight-hour theatre piece, "The Seven Streams of the River Ota," currently at the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Majestic Theatre, the remarkable French-Canadian director Robert Lepage turns his attention to Hiroshima, the Nazi Holocaust, and AIDS, and, while the results can feel as overwhelming as the subject matter, the production's individual sections can also be lighthearted. The second playlet, "Two Jeffreys," is set in a Greenwich Village apartment house circa 1965—a post-beatnik, pre-hippie enclave where a half-Japanese, half-American music student, Jeffrey Yamashita, has come to live, and where, unbeknownst to him, his half brother Jeffrey O'Connor also resides. In the center of Lepage's brilliant triptych set stands a dank communal bathroom where the two men and their neighbors (played by members of the Ex Machina troupe) wash, talk, argue, rehearse music, and develop photographs, all in doll-house-size quarters. Since the Brooklyn Academy has just replaced those punishingly hard benches in the Majestic with comfortable new seating, it's now the actors' turn to feel cramped.

Actors from Ex Machina,
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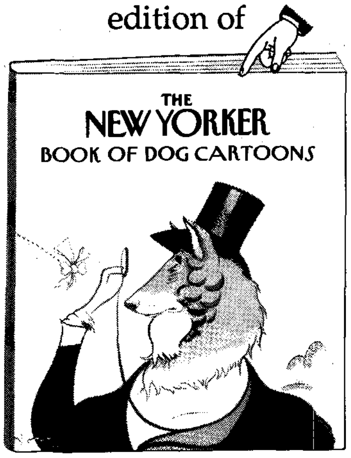

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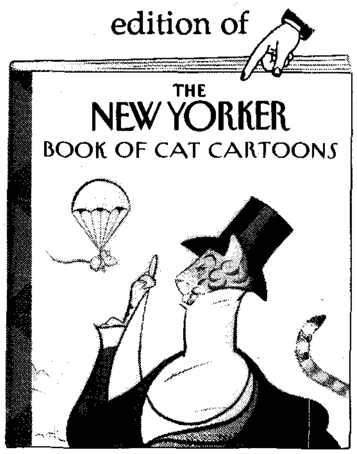

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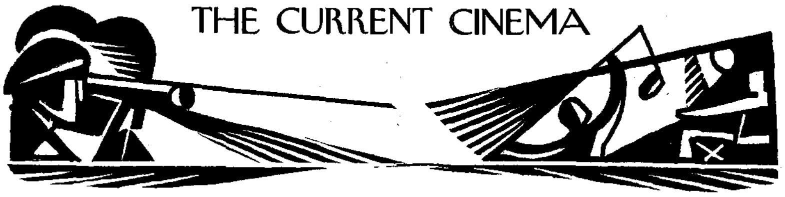
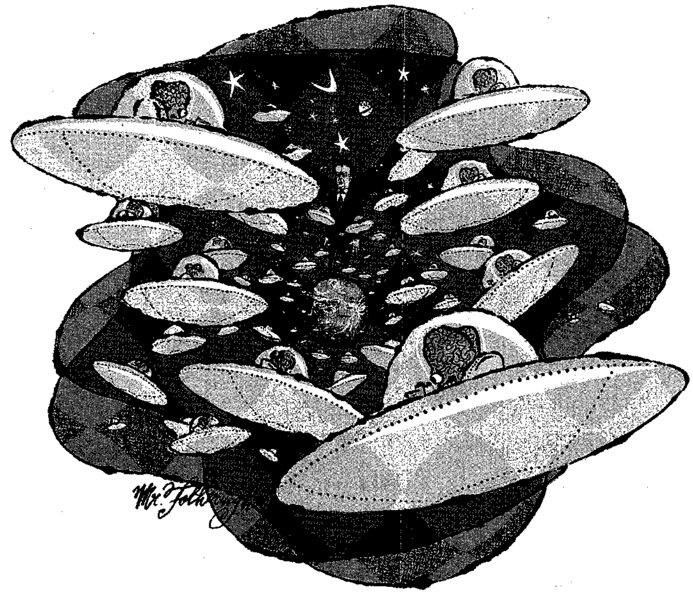


LOST IN THE STARS

"Mars Attacks!" and "Jerry Maguire."

BY TERRENCE RAFFERTY

AFTER the slick, impersonal stupidity of this summer's alien-invasion extravaganza "Independence Day," the self-conscious stupidity of Tim Burton's "Mars Attacks!" should be terrifically refreshing. Burton is much too intelligent to take the clichés of fifties science-fiction films seriously, and, unlike the makers of "Independence Day," he understands that state-of-the-art special effects can't disguise the essential cheesiness of the genre. For him, cheesiness is next to godliness: his last picture, "Ed Wood" (1994), was an affectionate biography of a famously untalented filmmaker, whose inept, zero-budget "Plan 9 from Outer Space" (1959) is now considered a camp classic. "Ed Wood" paid sweet-natured homage to the naïve ebullience of its subject, and it was full of odd, distinctive humor, but the idea that Tim Burton—whose body of work at that point included "Pee-Wee's Big Adventure" (1985), "Beetlejuice" (1988), "Batman" (1989), "Edward Scissorhands" (1990), and "Batman Returns" (1992), and constituted, as a whole, evidence of a brilliantly original comic style—was celebrating the brazen amateurishness of "Plan 9" was a little disturbing. Why would someone as gifted as Burton rhapsodize over a filmmaker who lacked even the most rudimentary skills? At the time, the notion seemed entirely disingenuous, but it now appears that Burton's admiration was sincere—that, perversely, he wished he *were* Ed Wood. With "Mars Attacks!" he comes perilously close to getting his wish.



Jack Nicholson among the aliens in Tim Burton's science-fiction comedy.

The movie is awful. And its awfulness—unlike that of "Plan 9"—seems intentional. The screenplay, by Jonathan Gems, isn't designed for anything like suspense or narrative coherence; it's just a structure that's flexible enough to contain a ragged, anything-goes assortment of sight gags and revue-type sketches. Flying saucers appear in the sky, and the doltish President (played by Jack Nicholson) decides on a measured, diplomatic response to the extraterrestrial visitors. The Martians touch down in the desert, announce that they have come in peace, and then whip out their sidearms and incinerate almost all the soldiers, reporters, and curiosity seekers who have gathered to greet them. Chaos ensues. The ruthless, cackling Martians (whose childlike joy in destruction recalls the behavior of the nasty little creatures in Joe Dante's "Gremlins" pictures) start blowing up everything in sight and frying every innocent bystander who crosses their path. While the President and his advisers plot strategy to repel the invaders, the movie skips around the United States to follow the fortunes of a handful of ordinary citizens—many of them "ordinary" only by the generous standards of Las Vegas, where a lot of the action takes place.

What you want from an episodic goofball comedy like "Mars Attacks!" is simple: good sight gags, lively performances, and, perhaps, the giddy momentum of helplessly escalating absurdity. Burton knows how to provide all those elements, but here he seems bent on frustrating every reasonable expectation the audience might have. With the exception of an eerily funny sequence in which a Martian disguised as a blond bombshell infiltrates the White House by coming on to the President's press secretary (played by Martin Short), the visual jokes are surprisingly feeble: it's hard to imagine anyone over the age of eight laughing at the sight of Martians drooling over *Playboy* and giving each other high fives, or finding the destruction of ugly Las Vegas hotels bracingly satiric. The alien-seductress sequence also contains the movie's only striking performance: Lisa Marie, as the Martian Mata Hari, looks and moves like a Barbie doll; staring impassively and swivelling her hips mechanically, she creates a hilarious, and truly unsettling, image of female desirability. None of the other performers in the large, starry cast make much of an impression. Those who are prone to overact have obviously been encouraged to explore the outer limits of their hamminess: Nicholson, who also plays a second, smaller role as a sleazy Vegas real-estate huckster, works his eyebrows and his creepy grin so strenuously that he looks as if he were about to explode, like John Cassavetes in "The Fury"; Rod Steiger, as a hawkish general, fumes and blusters and spits like one of the insane cold warriors of "Dr. Strangelove," and fails to get a single laugh; Glenn

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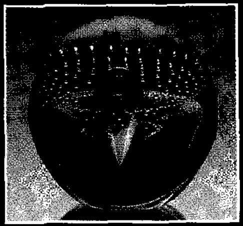
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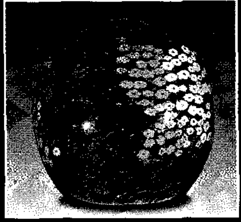
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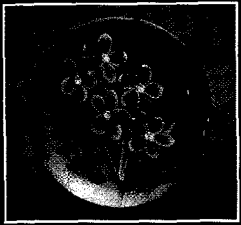
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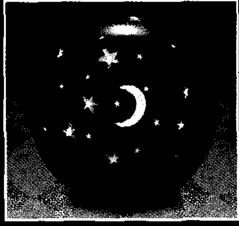
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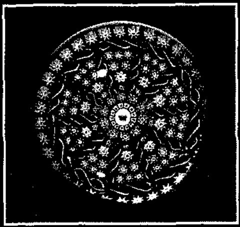
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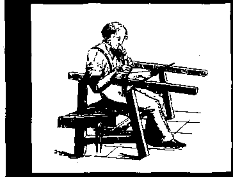
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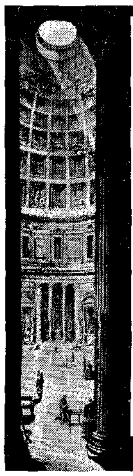
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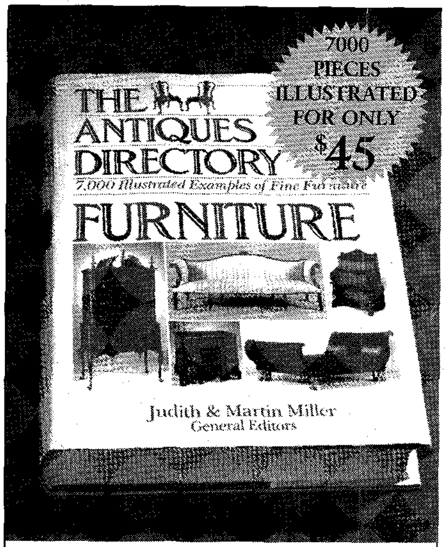
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Close, as the First Lady, does an uptight, Nancy Reaganish turn that consists entirely of pursed lips, ice-queen smiles, and huge, makeup-cracking screams.

Other stars—Annette Bening, Danny DeVito—are allowed to drift through the movie fairly inconspicuously; they look eager and superfluous, like extras. Sarah Jessica Parker and Pierce Brosnan get turned into humiliating special effects: her head is grafted onto the body of a chihuahua, his is simply severed and suspended in space, and in these altered states they play love scenes. Perhaps the clearest indication of Burton's peculiar intentions in "Mars Attacks!" is the way he uses the two most accomplished comic actors in the cast: neither Martin Short nor Michael J. Fox (who plays a reporter) has a single funny line, and both characters are killed off long before the end of the picture. What's the point of casting Short and Fox in straight-man roles? You might as well just cut off their heads.

And the picture certainly lacks the roller-coaster momentum that crazy comedy needs; the gags don't build on one another. It's possible that Burton took this joke-deprived script into production thinking that he could flesh it out with visual humor and then found that the material wasn't inspiring him as he'd hoped it would. I suspect, though, that the inertia of "Mars Attacks!" is the result of something more complex than the filmmaker's losing interest in his project. There's a strong whiff of self-destructiveness in this picture—of a desire on Burton's part to use his enormous budget and his glittering cast to as little purpose as possible, in order to validate the primitive aesthetic he endorsed (but didn't practice) in "Ed Wood." "Mars Attacks!" is *meant* to be a kind of anti-entertainment: a subversion of major-studio production values, of star power, of the sleek illusionism that pictures like "Independence Day" represent. In a sense, this movie, along with "Ed Wood," is Tim Burton's declaration of independence from the expectations created by the success of the "Batman" pictures. "Mars Attacks!" is like one of those messy, deliberately alienating albums that rock groups sometimes make after they've been embarrassed by commercial success. Projects of that sort always aim for some kind of liberating simplicity but often wind up feeling sour and tense. Burton has no obligation, to anyone, to make another "Batman," and he shouldn't have to turn himself into Ed Wood to prove it. The sad thing about "Mars Attacks!" is that its willful ineptitude isn't nearly as entertaining as the pure cluelessness of "Plan 9 from Outer Space." Maybe Burton can't make this alien invasion funny because he's too intent on battling the enemy within.

CAMERON CROWE'S "Jerry Maguire" suffers from its share of internal conflicts, too, but at least its insecurities and confusions don't manifest themselves as hostility toward the audience (or the actors). It's a diffident, gentle-spirited disappointment, and even when it obviously isn't working it's easy to take. Part of the problem with "Jerry Maguire" is that it peaks too early: Crowe sets up a much better movie in the first half hour than he's ultimately able to deliver. In the briskly edited opening scenes, Jerry (Tom Cruise), narrating in voice-over, gives us a kind of professional résumé sprinkled, unexpectedly, with self-deprecating philosophical asides. The hero is a glib, cocky, and extremely successful agent for professional athletes. He's a shark, but, unlike most of his fellow-predators at the large agency he works for, he has occasional qualms of conscience. Visiting an injured client—a hockey player recovering from his fourth concussion—Jerry smoothly, and insensitively, tells the player's young son that Dad should be back on the field in no time. The worried kid replies "Fuck you" and turns his back on Jerry, who is suddenly plunged into depression. ("Who had I become? Just another shark in a suit?") During his yuppie dark night of the soul, he composes a "mission statement" designed to inspire his colleagues. The business, he believes, needs to be humanized, and to that end he advocates a simple formula: "Fewer clients. Less money." Shining with moral purpose, he distributes copies of his manifesto to everyone in his office.

What makes the early scenes so funny is the movie's awareness that the hero is not going to be rewarded for his reformist zeal. In the light of day, Jerry himself realizes that he may have made a terrible mistake, and he is soon proved right: initially, he's treated as a hero in the office, but within a few days he has lost his job and all but one of his clients. Up to that point, "Jerry Maguire" is deft, fluid, and wonderfully eccentric: like Bill Forsyth's underrated "Comfort and Joy" (1984), it's a comedy about the spiritual crisis of a shallow man, and Crowe manages (as Forsyth did) to find the humor in his hero's rash, loopy idealism without condescending to it. The scenes of Jerry's simultaneous moral enlightenment and professional downfall have the sweetness and the comic tact that Crowe demonstrated in his lovely teen-age romance "Say Anything" (1989) and his buoyant ensemble comedy "Singles" (1992). And the director's delicate touch has a beneficial effect on the star: Cruise looks uncharacteristically relaxed, and in the first half hour of "Jerry Maguire" he does the best acting of his career.

But neither Cruise nor the movie maintains the speed and lightness of that promising beginning. The star, like the character he plays, seems to have second thoughts about the course that he's charted for himself: as the picture goes along, and Jerry slowly regains his confidence, Cruise frequently reverts to the intense, feisty, can-do shtick that has served him well in the past. He's the wrong sort of actor for Cameron Crowe's understated romantic-comedy style. Crowe doesn't go for big laughs or showy dramatic moments, and he cast his previous pictures with subtle, unassuming actors like John Cusack, Bridget Fonda, Campbell Scott, and Bill Pullman. Working with a star for the first time, he's clearly not comfortable providing the showstopper scenes that Cruise requires, and he loses control of the movie's fragile tone. Crowe appears uncertain, too, about how to handle the moral-uplift elements of the material. The real energy of "Jerry Maguire" is in the romance between the hero and his sensitive, slightly ditsy assistant (played by a talented newcomer named Renee Zellweger), but, since this is a big-budget, major-studio star vehicle, true love cannot be its own reward, as it was in Crowe's more modest earlier work: here the lovers have to be winners, too, so the filmmaker has to vindicate Jerry's idealism with renewed professional success. The hero's comeback is a kind of spiritual special effect, intended to fill viewers with awe. In a way, it's to Crowe's credit that Jerry Maguire's ultimate triumph looks about as real as the flying saucers in "Plan 9 from Outer Space." ♦

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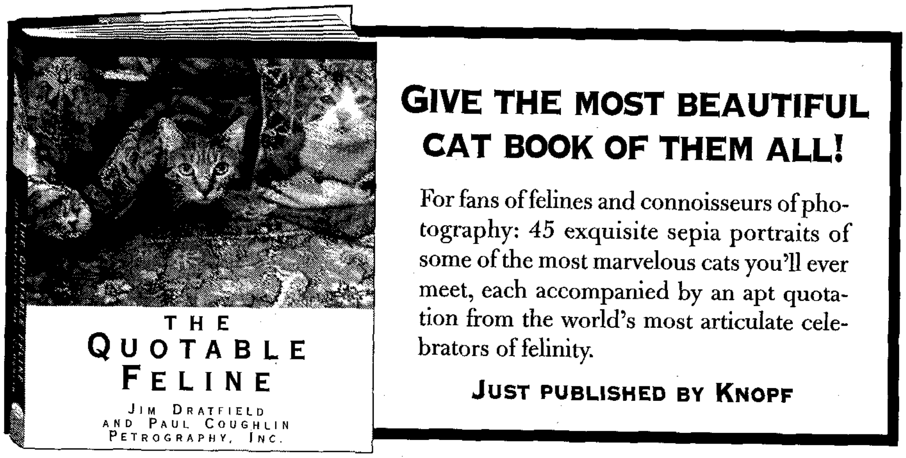
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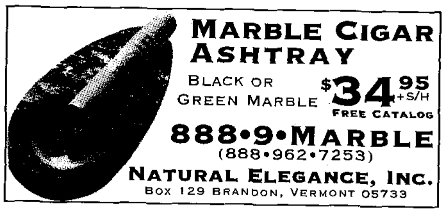
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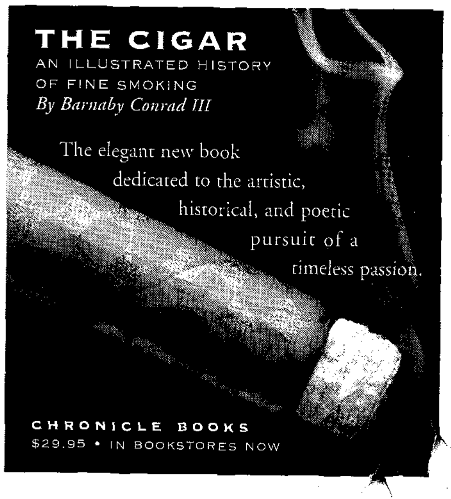
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BY FRANK CAMMUSO AND HART SEELY

57 Elm Street
Bethlehem, Pa.
11:51 P.M., December 24th.

WE'RE too late! It's already been here.

Mulder, I hope you know what you're doing.

Look, Scully, just like the other homes: Douglas fir, truncated, mounted, transformed into a shrine; halls decked with boughs of holly; stockings hung by the chimney, with care.

You really think someone's been here?

Someone, or some*thing*.

Mulder, over here—it's a fruitcake.

Don't touch it! Those things can be lethal.

It's O.K. There's a note attached: "Gonna find out who's naughty and nice."

It's judging them, Scully. It's making a list.

Who? What are you talking about?

Ancient mythology tells of an obese humanoid entity who could travel at great speed in a craft powered by antlered servants. Once each year, near the winter solstice, this creature is said to descend from the heavens to reward its followers and punish disbelievers with jagged chunks of anthracite.

But that's legend, Mulder—a story told by parents to frighten children. Surely you don't believe it?

Something was here tonight, Scully. Check out the bite marks on this gingerbread man. Whatever tore through this plate of cookies was massive—and in a hurry.

It left crumbs everywhere. And look, Mulder, this milk glass has been completely drained.

It gorged itself, Scully. It fed without remorse.

But why would they leave it milk and cookies?

Appeasement. Tonight is the Eve, and nothing can stop its wilding.

But if this thing does exist, how did it get in? The doors and windows were locked. There's no sign of forced entry.

Unless I miss my guess, it came through the fireplace.

Wait a minute, Mulder. If you're saying some huge creature landed on the roof and came down this chimney, you're crazy. The flue is barely six inches wide. Nothing could get down there.

But what if it could alter its shape, move in all directions at once?

You mean, like a bowl full of jelly?

Exactly. Scully, I've never told anyone this, but when I was a child my home was visited. I saw the creature. It had long white shanks of fur surrounding its ruddy, misshapen head. Its bloated torso was red and white. I'll never forget the horror. I turned away, and when I looked back it had somehow taken on the facial features of my father.

Impossible.

I know what I saw. And that night it read my mind. It brought me a Mr. Potato Head, Scully. *It knew that I wanted a Mr. Potato Head!*

I'm sorry, Mulder, but you're asking me to disregard the laws of physics You want me to believe in some supernatural being who soars across the skies and brings gifts to good little girls and boys. Listen to what you're saying. Do you understand the repercussions? I this gets out, they'll close the X-files

Scully, listen to me: It knows when you're sleeping. It knows when you're awake.

But we have no proof.

Last year, on this exact date, SET radio telescopes detected bogeys in the airspace over twenty-seven states. The White House ordered a Condition Red

But that was a meteor shower.

Officially. Two days ago, eight prized Scandinavian reindeer vanished from the National Zoo, in Washington, D.C Nobody—not even the zookeeper—was told about it. The governmen doesn't want people to know abou Project Kringle. They fear that if this thing is proved to exist the public wil stop spending half its annual income in a holiday shopping frenzy. Retai markets will collapse. Scully, they cannot let the world believe this creature lives. There's too much stake. They'l do whatever it takes to insure anothe silent night.

Mulder, I—

Sh-h-h. Do you hear what I hear On the roof. It sounds like . . . a clatter

The truth is up there. Let's see what' the matter. ♦

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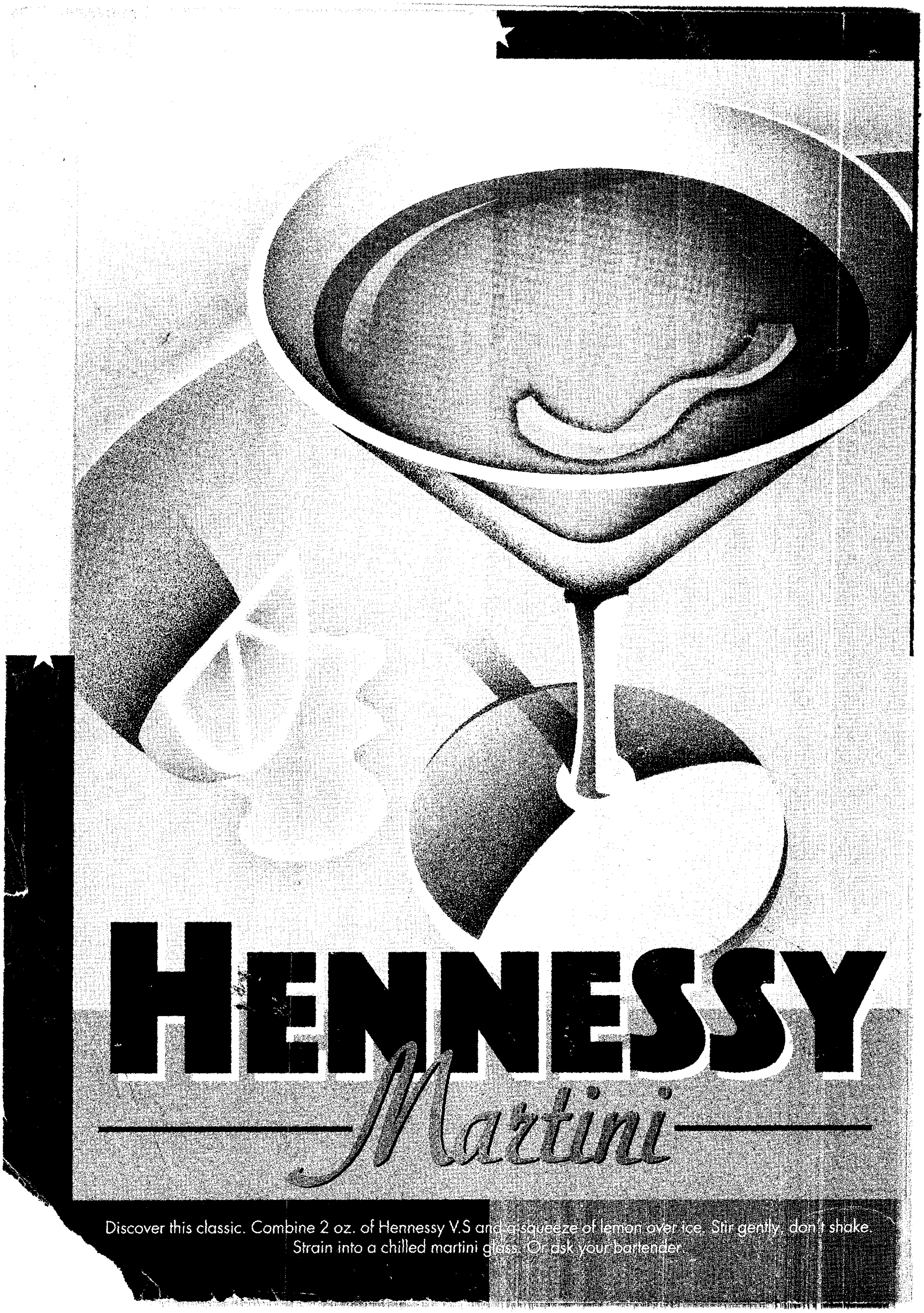

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